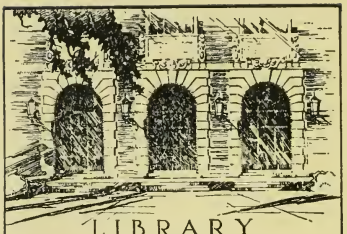

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S. Hollingsworth
Nov 28th 18

TEN

98

THOUSAND

A-YEAR.

Fortuna sævo læta negotio, et
Ludum insolentum ludere pertinax,
Transmutat incertos honores,
Nunc mihi, nunc alii benigna.
Laudo manentem: si celeres quatit
Pennas, resigno quæ dedit, et mea
Virtute me involvo, probamque
Pauperiem sine dote quæro.
HOR. CARM. Lib. iii. 49.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY AND HART.
1840.

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TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

About ten o'clock one Sunday morning, in the month of July, 183—, the dazzling sunbeams which had for many hours irradiated a little dismal back attic in one of the closest courts adjoining Oxford Street, in London, and stimulated with their intensity the closed eyelids of a young man lying in bed, at length awoke him. He rubbed his eyes for some time, to relieve himself from the irritation he experienced in them; and yawned and stretched his limbs with a heavy sense of weariness, as though his sleep had not refreshed him. He presently cast his eyes on the heap of clothes lying huddled together on the backless chair by the bedside, and where he had hastily flung them about an hour after midnight; at which time he had returned from a great draper's shop in Oxford Street, where he served as a shopman, and where he had nearly dropped asleep after a long day's work, while in the act of putting up the shutters. He could hardly keep his eyes open while he undressed, short as was the time it took him to do so; and on dropping exhausted into bed, there he had continued in deep unbroken slumber till the moment he is presented to the reader. He lay for several minutes, stretching, yawning, and sighing, occasionally casting an irresolute eye towards the tiny fireplace, where lay a modicum of wood and coal, with a tinder-box and a match or two placed upon the hob, so that he could easily light his fire for the

purposes of shaving and breakfasting. He stepped at length lazily out of bed, and when he felt his feet again yawned and stretched himself, then he lit his fire, placed his bit of a kettle on the top of it, and returned to bed, where he lay with his eyes fixed on the fire, watching the crackling blaze insinuating itself through the wood and coal. Once, however, it began to fail, so he had to get up and assist it by blowing and bits of paper; and it seemed in so precarious a state that he determined not again to lie down, but sit on the bedside, as he did with his arms folded, ready to resume operations if necessary. In this posture he remained for some time, watching his little fire, and listlessly listening to the discordant jangling of innumerable church-bells, clamorously calling the citizens to their devotions. What passed though his mind was something like the following:—

"Heigho!—Oh, Lord!—Dull as ditch-water!—This is my only holiday, yet I don't seem to enjoy it—the fact is, I feel knocked up with my week's work.—Lord, what a life mine is, to be sure! Here am I, in my eight-and-twentieth year, and for four long years have been one of the shopmen at Dowlas, Tagrag, Bobbin and Company's —slaving from seven o'clock in the morning till ten at night, and all for a salary of 35*l.* a-year and my board! And Mr. Tagrag is always telling me how high he's raised my salary. Thirty five pounds a year is all I have for lodging, and appearing like a gentleman! Oh, Lord, it can't last, for sometimes I feel getting desperate—such strange thoughts! Seven shillings a week do I pay for this cursed hole—[he uttered these words with a bitter emphasis, accompanied by a disgustful look round the little room]—that one couldn't swing a cat in without touching the four sides!—Last winter, three of our gents, (*i. e.* his fellow-shopmen) came to tea with me one Sunday night; and bitter cold as it was, we made this d—d dog-hole so hot, we were obliged to open the windows! And as for accommodations—I recollect I had to borrow two nasty chairs from the people below, who on the next Sunday, borrowed my only decanter in return, and, hang them, cracked it!—Curse me, if this life is worth having! It's all the very vanity of vanities, and no mistake! Fag, fag, fag, all one's days, and—what for? Thirty-five

pounds a-year, and '*no advance!*' Bah, bells! ring away till you're all cracked!—Now do you think *I'm* going to be mewed up in church on this the only day out of the seven I've got to sweeten myself in, and sniff fresh air? A precious joke that would be! Whew!—after all, I'd as leave sit here; for what's the use of my going out? Every body I see out is happy, excepting me, and the poor chaps that are like me!—Every body laughs when they see me, and know that I'm only a tallow-faced counter-jumper, for whom it's no use to go out!—Oh, Lord! what's the use of being good-looking, as some chaps say I am?"—Here he instinctively passed his left hand through a profusion of sandy-coloured hair, and cast an eye towards the bit of fractured looking-glass that hung against the wall, and which, by faithfully representing to him a by no means plain set of features (despite the dismal hue of his hair) whenever he chose to appeal to it, had afforded him more enjoyment than any other object in the world for years. "Ah, Lord! many and many's the fine gal I've done my best to attract the notice of, while I was serving her in the shop,—that is, when I've seen her get out of a carriage! There has been luck to many a chap like me, in the same line of speculation; look at Tom Tarnish—how did he get Miss Twang, the rich pianoforte maker's daughter?—and now he's cut the shop, and lives at Hackney like a regular gentleman! Ah! that was a stroke! But somehow, it hasn't answered with me yet: the gals don't take! Lord how I have set my eyes and ogled them—all of them don't seem to dislike the thing—and sometimes they'll smile, in a sort of way that says I'm safe—but 'tis no use, not a bit of it!—My eyes! catch me, by the way, ever nodding again to a lady on the Sunday, that had smiled when I stared at her while serving her in the shop—after what happened to me a month or two ago in the Park! Didn't I feel like damaged goods, just then! But, it's no matter, women are so different at different times!—Very likely I mismanaged the thing. By the way, what a precious puppy of a chap the fellow was that came up to her at the time she stepped out of her carriage to walk a bit! As for good looks—cut me to ribbons"—another glance at the glass—"no; I an't afraid there, neither—but,—heigh-ho!

—I suppose he was, as they say, born with a golden spoon in his mouth, and never so many thousand a-year, to make up to him for never so few brains! He was uncommon well dressed though, I must own. What trowsers!—they stuck so natural to him, he might have been born in them. And his waistcoat, and satin stock—what an air! And yet, his figure was nothing *very* out of the way! His gloves, as white as snow! I've no doubt he wears a pair of them a day—my stars! that's three and sixpence a-day, for don't I know what they cost?—Whew! if I had but the cash to carry on that sort of thing!—And when he had seen her into her carriage—the horse he got on!—and what a tip-top groom—that chap's wages I'll answer for it, were equal to my salary!" Here was a long pause.—"Now, just for the fun of the thing, only suppose luck was to befall me. Say somebody was to leave me lots of cash,—many thousands a-year, or something in that line! My stars! wouldn't I go it with the best of them!" Another long pause. "Gad, I really should hardly know how to begin to spend it!—I think, by the way, I'd buy a title to set off with—for what won't money buy? The thing's often done, there was a great biscuit baker in the city, the other day, made a baronet of, all for his money—and why shouldn't I?" He grew a little heated with the progress of his reflections, clasping his hands with involuntary energy, as he stretched them out to their fullest extent, to give effect to a very hearty yawn, "Lord, only think how it would sound!

"Sir Tittlebat Titmouse, Baronet.

"The very first place I'd go to after I'd got my title, and was rigged out in Stultze's tip-top, should be—our cursed shop, to buy a dozen or two pair of white kid. What a flutter there would be among the poor pale devils as were standing, just as ever, behind the counters, at Dowlas, Tagrag, and Co.'s, when my carriage drew up, and I stepped into the shop! Tagrag would come and attend to me himself. No he wouldn't—pride wouldn't let him. I don't know, though; what wouldn't he do to turn a penny, and make two and ninepence into three and a penny. I shouldn't quite come Captain Stiff over him; but I should treat him with a kind of an air, too, as if—hem! how de-

lightful!" A sigh and a pause. "Yes, I should often come to the shop. Gad, it would be half the fun of my fortune! And they would envy me, to be sure! How one should enjoy it! I wouldn't think of marrying till—and yet I won't say either; if I get among some of them out and outers—those first-rate articles—that lady, for instance, the other day in the Park—I should like to see her cut me as she did, with ten thousand a-year in my pocket! Why, she'd be running after *me*, or there's no truth in novels, which I'm sure there's often a great deal in. Oh, of course, I might marry whom I pleased. Who couldn't be got with ten thousand a year?" Another pause. "I should go abroad to Russia directly; for they tell me there's a man lives there who could dye this hair of mine any colour I liked—egad! I'd come home as black as a crow, and hold up my head as high as any of them! While I was about it, I'd have a touch at my eyebrows"—Crash went all his castle-building at the sound of his tea kettle, hissing, whizzing, sputtering in the agonies of boiling over; as if the intolerable heat of the fire had driven desperate the poor creature placed upon it, who instinctively tried thus to extinguish the cause of its anguish. Having taken it off and placed it upon the hob, and placed on the fire a tiny fragment of fresh coal, he began to make preparations for shaving, by pouring some of the hot water into an old tea-cup, which was presently to serve for the purpose of breakfast. Then he spread out a bit of crumpled whity-brown paper, that had folded up a couple of cigars which he had bought over-night for the Sunday's special enjoyment—and which, if he had supposed they had come from any place beyond the four seas, I imagine him to have been slightly mistaken. He placed this bit of paper on the little mantel-piece; drew his solitary, well-worn razor several times across the palm of his left-hand; dipped his brush, worn within the third of an inch to the stump, into the hot-water; presently passed it over as much of his face as he intended to shave; then rubbed on the damp surface a bit of yellow soap—and in less than five minutes Mr. Titmouse was a shaved man. But mark—don't suppose that he had performed an extensive operation. One would have thought him anxious to get rid of as much as possible of his abominable sandy-coloured hair—quite the contrary.

Every hair of his spreading whiskers was sacred from the touch of steel; and a bushy crop of hair stretched underneath his chin, coming curled out on each side of it, above his stock, like two little horns or tusks. An imperial—*i. e.* a dirt-coloured tuft of hair, permitted to grow perpendicularly down the upper lip of puppies—and a pair of promising mustachios, poor Mr. Titmouse had been compelled to sacrifice some time before, to the tyrannical whimsies of his vulgar employers, Messrs. Dowlas and Tagrag, who imagined them not to be exactly suitable appendages for counter-jumpers. So that it will be seen that the space shaved over on this occasion was somewhat circumscribed. This operation over, he took out of his trunk an old dirty-looking pomatum pot. A little of its contents, extracted on the tips of his two fore-fingers, he stroked carefully into his eyebrows; then spreading some on the palms of his hands, he rubbed it vigorously into his stubborn hair and whiskers for some quarter of an hour; and then combed and brushed his hair into half a dozen different dispositions—so fastidious in that matter was Mr. Titmouse. Then he dipped the end of a towel into a little water, and twisting it round his right fore-finger, passed it gently over his face, carefully avoiding his eyebrows, and the hair at the top, sides, and bottom of his face, which he then wiped with a dry corner of the towel; and no further did Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse think it necessary to carry his ablutions. Had he been able to "see himself as others saw him," in respect of those neglected regions which lay somewhere behind and beneath his ears, he might not possibly have thought it superfluous to irritate them with a little soap and water; but, after all, he knew best; it might have given him cold; and besides, his hair was very thick and long behind, and might, perhaps, conceal any thing that was unsightly. Then Mr. Titmouse drew from underneath the bed a bottle of Warren's "incomparable blacking," and a couple of brushes, with great labour and skill polishing his boots up to a wonderful point of brilliancy. Having washed his hands, and replaced his blacking implements under the bed, he devoted a few moments to boiling about three tea-spoonfuls of coffee, (as it was styled on the paper from which he took, and in which he

had bought it—whereas it was, in fact, chicory.) Then he drew forth from his trunk a calico shirt, with linen wristbands and collars, which had been worn only twice since its last washing—*i. e.* on the preceding two Sundays—and put it on, taking great care not to rumple a very showy front, containing three little rows of frills; in the middle one of which he stuck three "studs," connected together with two little gilt chains, looking exceedingly stylish—especially coupled with a span-new satin stock which he next buckled round his neck. Having put on his bright boots, (without, I am sorry to say, any stockings,) he carefully insinuated his legs into a pair of white trousers, for the first time since their last washing; and what with his short straps and high braces, they were so tight that you would have feared their bursting, if he should have sat hastily. I am almost afraid that I shall hardly be believed, but it is a fact, that the next thing that he did was to attach a pair of spurs to his boots:—but, to be sure, it was not *impossible* that he might intend to ride during the day. Then he put on a queer kind of under waistcoat, which in fact was only a roll-collar of rather faded pea-green silk, and designed to set off a very fine flowered damson-coloured silk waistcoat; over which he drew a massive mosaic gold chain, (to purchase which he had sold a serviceable silver watch,) which had been carefully wrapped up in cotton wool; from which soft depository, also, he drew HIS RING, (those must have been sharp eyes that could tell, at a distance, and in a hurry, that it was not diamond,) which he placed on the stumpy little finger of his red and thick right hand—and contemplated its sparkle with exquisite satisfaction.

Having proceeded thus far with his toilet, he sat down to his breakfast, spreading the shirt he had taken off upon his lap, to preserve his white trowsers from spot or stain—his thoughts alternating between his late waking vision and his purposes for the day. He had no butter, having used the last on the preceding morning; so he was fain to put up with dry bread—and very dry and teeth-trying it was, poor fellow—but his eye lit on his ring! Having swallowed two cups of his *quasi*-coffee, (eugh! such stuff!) he resumed his toilet, by drawing out of his other trunk his blue surtout, with embossed silk buttons and

velvet collar, and an outside pocket in the left breast. Having smoothed down a few creases, he put it on:—then, before him the little vulgar fraction of a glass, he stood twitching about the collar, and sleeves, and front, so as to make them sit well; concluding with a careful elongation of the wrist-bands of his shirt, so as to show their whiteness gracefully beyond the cuff of his coat-sleeve—and he succeeded in producing a sort of white boundary line between the blue of his coat-sleeve and the red of his hand. At that useful member he could not help looking with a sigh, as he had often done before—for it was not a handsome hand. It was broad and red, and the fingers were thick and stumpy, with very coarse deep wrinkles at every joint. His nails also were flat and shapeless; and he used to be continually gnawing them till he had succeeded in getting them down to the quick—and they were a sight to set a Christian's teeth on edge. Then he extracted from the first mentioned trunk a white pocket-handkerchief—an exemplary one, that had gone through four Sundays' show, (not *use*, be it understood,) and yet was capable of exhibition again. A pair of sky-coloured kid gloves next made their appearance; which, however, showed such barefaced marks of former service as rendered indispensable a ten minutes' rubbing with bread crumbs. His Sunday hat, carefully covered with silver-paper, was next gently removed from its well-worn box—ah, how lightly and delicately did he pass his smoothing hand round its glossy surface! Lastly, he took down a thin black cane, with a gilt head, and full brown tassel, from a peg behind the door—and his toilet was complete. Laying down his cane for a moment, he passed his hands again through his hair, arranging it so as to fall nicely on each side beneath his hat, which he then placed upon his head, with an elegant inclination towards the left side. He was really not bad-looking, in spite of his sandy-coloured hair. His forehead, to be sure, was contracted, and his eyes of a very light colour, and a trifle too protuberant; but his mouth was rather well-formed, and being seldom closed, exhibited very beautiful teeth; and his nose was of that description which generally passes for a Roman nose. His countenance wore generally a smile, and was expressive of—self-satisfac-

tion; and surely any expression is better than none at all. As for the slightest trace of *intellect* in it, I should be misleading the reader if I were to say any thing of the sort. He was about five feet five inches in height, and rather strongly set, with a little tendency to round shoulders:—but his limbs were pliant and his motions nimble.

Here you have, then, Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse to the life—certainly no more than an average sample of his kind; but as he is to go through a considerable variety of situation and circumstance, I thought you would like to have him as distinctly before your mind's eye as it was in my power to present him. Well—he put his hat on, as I have said: buttoned the lowest two buttons of his surtout, and stuck his white pocket-handkerchief into the outside pocket in front, as already mentioned, disposing it so as to let a little of it appear above the edge of the pocket, with a sort of careful carelessness—a graceful contrast to the blue; drew on his gloves; took his cane in his hand; drained the last sad remnant in his coffee-cup; and, the sun shining in the full splendour of a July noon, and promising a glorious day, forth sallied this poor fellow, an Oxford Street Adonis, going forth conquering and to conquer! Petty finery without, a pinched and stinted stomach within; a case of Back *versus* Belly, (as the lawyers would say,) the plaintiff winning in a canter! Forth sallied, I say, Mr. Titmouse, down the narrow, creaking, close staircase, which he had not quitted before he heard exclaimed from an opposite window, "My eyes, *an't* that a swell!" He felt how true the observation was, and that at that moment he was somewhat out of his element; so he hurried on, and soon reached the great broad street, apostrophized by the celebrated Opium-Eater, with bitter feeling, as—"Oxford Street!—stony-hearted stepmother! Thou that listenest to the sighs of orphans, and drinkest the tears of children." Here, though his spirits were not just then very buoyant, the poor dandy breathed more freely than when he was passing through the nasty crowded court (Closet Court) which he had just quitted. He passed and met hundreds who, like himself, seemed released for a precious day's interval from intense toil and miserable confinement during the week; but there were

not many of them who had any pretensions to vie with him in elegance of appearance—and that was a *luxury!* Who could do justice to the air with which he strutted along! He felt as happy, poor soul, in his little ostentation, as his Corinthian rival in tip-top turnout, after twice as long, and as anxious, and fifty times as expensive, preparations for effective public display! Nay, *my* poor swell was greatly the superior of such an one as I have alluded to. Titmouse, *did*, to a great degree, bedizen his back at the expense of his belly; whereas, the Corinthian exquisite, too often taking advantage of station and influence, recklessly both satiates his appetite within, and decorates his person without, at the expense of innumerable heart-aching creditors. I do not mean, however, to claim any real merit for Titmouse on this score, because I am not sure how he would act if he were to become possessed of his magnificent rival's means and opportunities for the perpetration of gentlemanly frauds on a splendid scale. But we shall, perhaps, see by and by. He walked along with leisurely step; for haste and perspiration were vulgar, and he had the day before him.

Observe the careless glance of self-satisfaction with which he occasionally regarded his bright boots, with their martial appendage, giving out a faint tingling sound as he heavily trod the broad flags; his spotless trowsers, his tight surtout, and the tip of white handkerchief peeping accidentally out in front! A pleasant sight it was to behold him in a chance rencontre with some one genteel enough to be recognised—as he stood, resting on his left leg; his left arm stuck upon his hip; his right leg easily bent outwards; his right hand lightly holding his ebon cane, with the gilt-head of which he occasionally tapped his teeth; and his eyes, half-closed, scrutinizing the face and figure of each "*pretty gal*" as she passed! This was indeed happiness, as far as his forlorn condition could admit of his enjoying it. He had no particular object in view. A tiff over-night with two of his shopmates had broken off a party which they had agreed the Sunday preceding in forming, to go to Greenwich on the ensuing Sunday; and this little circumstance a little soured his temper, depressed as were his spirits before. He resolved to-day to walk straight on, and dine some-

where a little way out of town, by way of passing the time till four o'clock, at which hour he intended to make his appearance in Hyde Park, "to see the fashions," which was his favourite Sunday occupation.

His condition was, indeed, forlorn in the extreme. To say nothing of his *prospects* in life—what was his present condition? A shopman, with £35 a-year, out of which he had to find his clothing, washing, lodging, and all other incidental expenses—his board being found him by his employers. He was five weeks in arrear to his landlady—a corpulent old termagant, whom nothing could have induced him to risk offending, but his overmastering love of finery; for I grieve to say, that this deficiency had been occasioned by his purchase of the ring he then wore with so much pride. How he had contrived to pacify her—lie upon lie as he must have had recourse to—I know not. He was in debt, too, to his poor washerwoman in six or seven shillings for nearly a quarter's washing; and owed five times that amount to a little old tailor, who, with huge spectacles on his nose, turned up to him, out of a little cupboard which he occupied in Closet Court, and which Titmouse had to pass whenever he went to or from his lodgings, a lean, sallow, wrinkled face, imploring him to "settle his small account." All the cash in hand which he had to meet contingencies between that day and quarter-day, which was six weeks off, was about twenty-six shillings, of which he had taken one for the present day's expenses!

Revolving these somewhat disheartening matters in his mind, he passed easily and leisurely along the whole length of Oxford Street. No one could have judged from his dressy appearance, the constant smirk on his face, and his confident air, how very miserable that poor dandy was; but three-fourths of his misery were occasioned by the impossibility he felt of his ever being able to indulge in his propensities for finery and display. Nothing better had he to occupy his few thoughts. He had had only a plain mercantile education, as it is called, *i. e.* reading, writing, and arithmetic: beyond a very moderate acquaintance with these, he knew nothing whatever; not having read more than a few novels, and plays, and

sporting newspapers. Deplorable, however, as were his circumstances—

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

And probably, in common with most who are miserable from straightened circumstances, he often conceived, and secretly relied upon, the possibility of an unexpected change for the better; he had heard and read of extraordinary cases of LUCK. Why might he not be one of the LUCKY? A rich girl might fall in love with him—that was, poor fellow! in his consideration, the least unlikely way of luck's advent; or some one might leave him money; or he might win a prize in the lottery;—all these, and other accidental modes of getting enriched, frequently occurred to the well-regulated mind of Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse; but he never once thought of determined, unwearying industry and perseverence in the way of his business conducing to such a result.

Is his case a solitary one?—Dear reader, you may be unlike poor Tittlebat Titmouse in every respect except one!

On he walked towards Bayswater; and finding it was yet early, and considering that the farthest he went from town the better prospect there was of his being able, with a little sacrifice of appearances to get a dinner consistent with the means he carried about with him, viz. one shilling, he pursued his way a mile or two beyond Bayswater, and sure enough, came at length upon a nice little public-house on the roadside, called the Squaretoes Arms. Very tired, and quite smothered with dust, he first sat down in a small back room to rest himself; and took the opportunity to call for a clothes-brush and shoe-brush, to relieve his clothes and boots from the heavy dust upon them. Having thus attended to his outer man, as far as circumstances would permit, he bethought himself of his inner man, whose cravings he satisfied with a pretty substantial mutton-pie and a pint of porter. This fare, together with a penny to the little girl who waited on him, cost him tenpence; and having somewhat refreshed himself, he began to think of returning to town. Having lit one of his two cigars, he sallied forth, puffing along with an air of quiet enjoyment. Dinner, however humble,

seldom fails, especially when accompanied by a fair draught of good porter, in some considerable degree to tranquillize the animal spirits; and that soothing effect began soon to be experienced by Mr. Titmouse. The sedative *cause* he erroneously attributed to the cigar he was smoking; whereas in fact the only tobacco he had imbibed was from the porter. But, however that might be, he certainly returned towards town in a far calmer and even more cheerful humour than that in which he had quitted it an hour or two before.

As he approached Cumberland Gate, it wanted about a quarter to five; and the Park might be said to be at its *acme* of fashion, as far as that could be indicated by a sluggish stream of carriages, three and four a-breast—coroneted panels in abundance—noble and well-known equestrians of both sexes, in troops—and some thousand pedestrians of the same description. So continuous was the throng of carriages and horsemen, that Titmouse did not find it the easiest matter in the world to shoot across the footpath in the minor circle. That, however, he safely accomplished, encountering no more serious mischance than the subdued "D—n your eyes!" of a groom, between whom and his master Mr. Titmouse had presumed to intervene. What a crowd of elegant women, many of them young and beautiful (who but such, to be sure, would become, or be allowed to become, pedestrians in the Park?) he encountered as he slowly sauntered on, all of them obsequiously attended by brilliant beaux! Lords and ladies were here manifestly as plentiful as plebeians in Oxford Street. What an enchanted ground!—How delicious this soft crush and flutter of aristocracy! Poor Titmouse felt his utter insignificance. Many a sigh of dissatisfaction and envy escaped him; yet he stepped along with a tolerably-assured air, looking every body he met straight in the face, and occasionally twirling about his little cane with an air which seemed to say—"Whatever opinion you may form of me, I have a very good opinion of myself." Indeed, was he not as much a man—an Englishman—as the best of them? What was the real difference between Count Do-'em-all and Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse? Only that the Count had dark whiskers, and owed more money than Mr. Titmouse's creditors

could be persuaded to allow him to owe! Would to heaven—thought Titmouse—that any *one* tailor would patronise him, as half-a-dozen had patronized the Count! If pretty ladies of quality did not disdain a walking advertisement of three or four first-rate tailors, like the Count, why should they turn up their noses at an assistant in an extensive wholesale and retail establishment in Oxford Street, conversant with the qualities and prices of the most beautiful articles of female attire? Leaning against the railing in a studied attitude, and eyeing wistfully each gay and fashionable equipage, with its often lovely, and sometimes haughty enclosure, as it rolled slowly past him, Mr. Titmouse became more and more convinced that the only real distinction between mankind was that effected by money. Want of money alone had placed him in his present abject position. Abject indeed! By the great folk, who were passing him on all sides, he felt, well-dressed as he believed himself to be, that he was no more noticed than if he had been a pismire, a blue-bottle fly, or a black beetle! He looked, and sighed—sighed, and looked—looked, and sighed again, in a kind of agony of vain longing. While his only day in the week for breathing fresh air, and appearing like a gentleman in the world, was rapidly drawing to a close, and he was beginning to think of returning to the dog-hole he had crawled out of in the morning, and the shop for the rest of the week; the great, the gay, and the happy folk he was looking at, were thinking of driving home to dress for their grand dinners, and to lay out every kind of fine amusement for the ensuing week, and that was the sort of life they led every day in the week. He heaved a profound sigh. At that moment a superb cab, with a gentleman in it dressed in great elegance, and with a very keen and striking countenance, came up with a cab of still more exquisite structure and appointments, in which sate a young man, evidently of consequence; very handsome, with splendid mustachios; perfectly well-dressed; holding the reins and whip gracefully in his hands, glistening in straw-coloured kid gloves—and between the two gentlemen ensued the following low-toned colloquy, which it were to be wished that every such sighing simpleton

(as Titmouse must, I fear, now appear to the reader) could have overheard.

"Ah, Fitz!" said the former-mentioned gentleman to the latter, who blushed scarlet when he perceived who had addressed him—"when did you return to town?"

"Last night only."

"Enjoyed yourself, I hope?"

"Pretty well—but I suppose you——"

"Sorry for it," interrupted the first speaker in a lower tone, perceiving the vexation of his companion, "but can't help it, you know."

"When?"

"To-morrow at nine. Monstrous sorry for it—'pon my soul, Fitz, you really must look sharp, or the thing won't go on much longer."

"Must it be, really?" inquired the other, biting his lips—at that moment kissing his hand to a very beautiful girl, who slowly passed him in a coroneted chariot—"must it really be, Joe?" he repeated, turning towards his companion a pale and bitterly chagrined countenance.

"Poz, 'pon my life. Cage clean, however, and not very full——"

"Would not *Wednesday?*——" inquired the other, leaning forwards towards the former speaker's cab, and whispering with an air of intense earnestness. "The fact is, I've engagements at C——'s on Monday and Tuesday nights with one or two country cousins, and I *may* be in condition—eh? you understand?"

His companion shook his head distrustfully.

"Upon my word and honour as a gentleman, it's the fact!" said the other, in a low vehement tone.

"Then—say Wednesday, nine o'clock, A.M. You understand? No mistake, Fitz!" replied his companion, looking him steadily in the face as he spoke.

"None—honour!"—After a pause—"Who is it?"

His companion took a slip of paper out of his pocket, and in a whisper read from it—"Cabs, harness, &c., £197, 10*s*."

"A villain! It's been of only eighteen months' standing," interrupted the other, in an indignant mutter.

"Between ourselves, he is rather a sharp hand. Then,

I am sorry to say there's a detainer or two I have had a hint of——"

"D—n their souls!" exclaimed the other, with an expression of mingled disgust, vexation, and hatred, and adding, "Wednesday, nine"—drove off a picture of tranquil enjoyment.

I need hardly say that he was a fashionable young spendthrift, and the other a sheriff's officer of the first water—the genteelest *beak* that ever was known or heard of—who had been on the look-out for him several days, and with whom the happy youngster was doomed to spend some considerable time at a cheerful residence in Chancery Lane, bleeding gold at every pore the while;—his only chance of avoiding which, was, as he had truly hinted, an honourable attempt on the purses of two hospitable country cousins, in the meanwhile, at C——'s! And if he did not succeed in that enterprise, so that he *must* go to cage, he lost the only chance he had for some time of securing an exemption from such annoyance, by entering Parliament to protect the liberties of the people—an eloquent and resolute champion of freedom in trade, religion and every thing else; an abolitionist of every thing, including, especially, negro slavery and imprisonment for debt—two execrable violations of the natural rights of mankind.

But we have, for several minutes, lost sight of the admiring Titmouse.

"Why," thought he, "am *I* thus spited by fortune?—The only thing she's given *me* is—nothing! *D—n every thing!*" exclaimed Mr. Titmouse aloud, at the same time starting off, to the infinite astonishment of an old peer, who had been for some minutes standing leaning against the railing, close beside him, who was master of a magnificent fortune, "with all appliances and means to boot:" with a fine grown-up family, his eldest son and heir having just gained a Double First, and promising wonders; many mansions in different parts of England; exquisite taste and accomplishment; the representative of one of the oldest families in England; but who at that moment loathed every thing and every body, including himself, because the minister had that day intimated to him that he could not give him a vacant riband, for which he had applied, unless he could command two more votes in the

Lower House, and which at present he saw no earthly means of doing. Yes, the Earl of Cheviotdale and Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse were both miserable men; both had been hardly dealt with by fortune; both were greatly to be pitied; and both quitted the Park, about the same time, with a decided misanthropic tendency.

Mr. Titmouse walked along Piccadilly with a truly chapfallen and disconsolate air. He almost felt dissatisfied even with his personal appearance. Dress as he would, no one seemd to care a curse for him; and, to his momentarily jaundiced eye, he seemed equipped in only second-handed and shabby finery—and then he was really such a *poor* devil. Do not let the reader suppose that this was an unusual mood with Titmouse. No such thing. Like the Irishman who "married a wife for to make him *un-aisy*;" and also not unlike the moth that *will* haunt the brightness that is her destruction; so poor Titmouse, Sunday after Sunday, dressed himself out as elaborately as he had done on the present occasion, and then always betook himself to the scene he had just again witnessed, and which once again had excited only those feelings of envy, bitterness, and despair, which I have been describing, and which, on every such occasion, he experienced with, if possible, increased intensity.

What to do with himself till it was time to return to his cheerless lodgings he did not exactly know; so he loitered along at a snail's pace. He stood for some time staring at the passengers, their luggage, the coaches they were ascending and alighting from, and listening to the strange medley of coachmen's, guards', and porters' vociferations, and passengers' greetings and leave-takings—always to be observed at the White Horse Cellar. Then he passed along, till a street row, near the Haymarket, attracted his attention and interested his feelings; for it ended in a regular set-to between two watermen attached to the adjoining coach-stand. Here he conceived himself looking on with the easy air of a swell; and the ordinary penalty (paying for his footing) was attempted to be exacted from him; but he had nothing to be picked out of any of his pockets except that under his very nose, and which contained his white handkerchief. This over, he struck into Leicester Square, where, (he was in luck that night,) hur-

rying up to another crowd at the further end, he found a man preaching with infinite energy. Mr. Titmouse looked on, and listened for two or three minutes with apparent interest; and then, with a countenance in which pity struggled with contempt, muttered, loud enough to be heard by all near him, "poor devil!" and walked off. He had not proceeded many steps, before it occurred to him that a friend—one Robert Huckaback—much such another one as himself—lived in one of the narrow, dingy streets in the neighbourhood. He determined to take the chances of his being at home, and if so, of spending the remainder of the evening with him. Huckaback's quarters were in the same ambitious proximity to heaven as his own; the only difference being, that they were a trifle cheaper and larger. He answered the door himself, having only the moment before returned from *his* Sunday's excursion,—*i. e.* the Jack Straw's Castle Tea Gardens, at Highbury, where, in company with several of his friends, he had "spent a jolly afternoon." He ordered in a glass of negus from the adjoining public-house, after some discussion, which ended in an agreement that he should stand treat that night, and Titmouse on the ensuing one. As soon as the negus arrived, accompanied by two captain's biscuits, which looked so hard and hopeless that they would have made the nerves thrill within the teeth that attempted to masticate them, the candle was lit—Huckaback handed a cigar to his friend; both began to puff away, and chatter pleasantly concerning the many events and scenes of the day,

"Any thing stirring in to-day's 'Flash?'" inquired Titmouse, as his eye caught sight of a copy of that able and interesting Sunday newspaper, which Huckaback had hired for the evening from the news-shop on the ground-floor of his lodgings.

"Not knowing, can't say," answered his friend, removing his cigar with his right hand, and then, with closed eyes and inflated cheeks, he very slowly ejected the smoke which he had last inhaled, and rose and took down the paper from the shelf.

"Here's a mark of a beastly porter pot that's been set upon it, by all that's holy! It's been at the public-house! Too bad of Mrs. Coggs to send it me in this state!" said

he, handling it as though its touch were contamination. "Faugh! how it stinks!"

"What a horrid beast she must be!" exclaimed Titmouse, in like manner expelling his mouthful of smoke. "But, since better can't be had, let's hear what news is in it. D——e, it's the only paper published, in my opinion, that's worth reading! Any fights a stirring?"

"Haven't come to them yet," replied Huckaback, fixing his feet on another chair, and drawing the candle closer to the paper. "It says, by the way, that the Duke of Dunderhead is certainly making up to Mrs. Thumps, the rich Nightman's widow;—a precious good hit that, is'nt it? You know the Duke's as poor as a rat!"

"Oh! *that's* no news. It will quite set him up—and no mistake. Seen the Duke ever?"

"Ye—es! Oh, several times!"—This was a lie, and Tittlebat knew that it was.

"D——d good looking, I suppose?"

"Why—middling; I should say middling. Know *some* that needn't fear to compare with him—eh! Tittlebat?—and Huckaback winked archly at his friend.

"Ah, ha, ha!—a pretty joke! But come, that's a good chap! You can't be reading both of them at once—give us the other sheet, and set the candle right betwixt us! Come, fair's the word!"

Huckaback, thus appealed to, did as his friend requested; and the two friends read and smoked for some minutes in silence.

"Well—I shall spell over the advertisements now," said Titmouse; "there's a pretty lot of them—and I've read every thing else—precious little there is, *here*, besides! So, here goes!—One *may* hear of a prime situation, you know—and I'm quite sick of Dowlas!"

Another interval of silence ensued. Huckaback was deep in the details of a trial for murder; and Titmouse after having glanced listlessly over the entertaining first sheet of advertisements, was on the point of laying down his half of the paper, when he suddenly started in his chair, and stammered—

"Hollo!—hollo!—Why—"

"What's the matter, Tit?—eh?" inquired Huckaback, greatly astonished.

For a moment, Titmouse made no answer, but fixed his eyes intently on the paper, which began to rustle in his trembling hands. What occasioned this eloquent outbreak, with its subsequent agitation, was the following advertisement:

"NEXT OF KIN.—Important.—The next of kin, if any such there be, of Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, formerly of Whithaven, cordwainer, and who died somewhere about the year 1793, in London, may hear of something of the GREATEST POSSIBLE IMPORTANCE to himself, or herself, or themselves, by immediately communicating with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, solicitors, Saffron Hill. No time is to be lost. 9th July, 183–. *The third advertisement.*"

"By George! Here *is* a go!" exclaimed Huckaback, almost as much flustered.

"We aren't dreaming, Hucky, are we?" inquired Titmouse, his eyes still glued to the newspaper.

"No—by George! Never was either of us fellows so precious wide awake in our lives before, that I'll answer for!" Titmouse sate still and silent, and turned very pale.

"Read it up, Huck!—Let's hear how it *sounds*, and then we shall believe it!"

Huckaback read it aloud.

"It sounds like something, don't it?" inquired Titmouse, his colour a little returning.

"Uncommon!—If this isn't something, then there's nothing in any thing any more!"

"No!—now, do you really think so?" said Titmouse, seeking further confirmation than he had yet derived from his senses of sight and hearing.

"I do, by ——! What a go it is!—Well, my poor old mother used to say, 'depend on it, wonders never *will* cease;' and curse me if she ever said a truer word!"

Titmouse again read over the advertisement; and then relighting his fragment of cigar, puffed earnestly in silence for some moments.

"Such things never happens to such a poor devil of a chap as me!" exclaimed Huckaback with a sigh.

"What *is* in the wind, I wonder?" muttered Titmouse.

"Who knows—hem!—who knows. But now, *really*—" he paused, and once more read over the pregnant paragraph. "It can't—no, it *can't* be—"

"What, Tit? what can't be?" interrupted Huckaback eagerly.

"Why, I've been thinking—but what do *you* think, eh?—it can't be a cursed hoax of the chaps in the premises at Dowlas'?"

"Bo!—Is there any of 'em flush enough of money, to do the thing? And how should they think it would ever come to be seen by you? Then, besides, there isn't a chap among them that could come up to the composing a piece of composition like that—no, not for a whole year's salary—there isn't, by George!"

"Ah! I don't know," said Titmouse, doubtfully. "But —honour!—do you really now think there's any thing in it?"

"I do—hanged if I don't, Tit!" was the sententious answer.

"Tol de rol, de rol, de rol, de rol,—didl'em daddl'em—bough!" almost shouted Titmouse, jumping up, snapping his fingers, and dancing about in a wild ecstacy, which lasted for at least a minute.

"Give me your hand, Hucky," said he, almost breathless. "If I *am* a made man—tol de rol, lol de rol, lol de rol, lo!—you see Huck!—if I don't give you the handsomest breast-pin you ever saw! No paste! real diamond! hurrah! I will, by jingo!"

Huckaback grasped and squeezed his hand. "We've always been friends, Tit—haven't we?" said he affectionately.

"My room won't hold me to-night!" continued Titmouse; "I'm sure it won't. I feel as if I were swelling all over. I'll walk the streets all night. I couldn't sleep a wink for the life of me. I'll walk about till the shop opens. Oh, faugh! how nasty! Confound the shop, and Dowlas, Tag-rag, (especially Tag-rag,) and every thing, and every body in it! Thirty-five pounds a-year! See if I won't spend as much in cigars the first month!"

"Cigars! Is that your go? Now, *I* should take lesson's in boxing, to begin with. It's a deuced high thing, you may depend upon it, and you can't be fit company for swells without it, Tit!"

"Whatever you like, whatever you like, Hucky! I'm sorry to say it, but how precious lucky that my father

and mother's dead, and that I'm an only child—too-ra-laddy ! too-ra-laddy !" Here he took such a sudden leap, that I am ashamed to say he split his trowsers very awkwardly, and that sobered him for a moment, while they made arrangements for cobbling it up as well as might be, with a needle and thread, which Huckaback always had by him.

"We're rather jumping in the dark a bit, aren't we, Tit ?" inquired Huckaback, while his companion was repairing the breach. "Let's look what it all means—here it is." He read it all aloud again—"*greatest possible importance*"—what *can* it mean ? Why the deuce couldn't they speak out plainly ?"

"What ! in a newspaper ? Lord, Hucky ! how many Titmouses would start up on all sides, if there isn't some already ! I wonder what '*greatest possible importance*' can mean now ?"

"Some one's left you an awful lot of money, of course."

"It's too good to be true."

"Or you may have made a *smite;* you an't such a bad-looking fellow when you're dressed as you are now." Mr. Titmouse was quite flustered with the mere supposition, and also looked as sheepish as his features could admit of.

"E-e-e-eh, Hucky ! how very silly you are !" he simpered.

Or you may be found out heir to some great property, and all that kind of thing. But when do you intend to go to Messrs. What's-their name ? I say, the sooner the better. Come, you've stitched them well enough, now ; they'll hold you till you get home ; but I'd take off my straps, if I were you. Why shouldn't we go to these gents. now ? Ah, here they are—Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, solicitors."

"I wonder if they're great ones ? Did you ever hear of them before ?"

"Haven't I ! Their names is always in this same paper ; they are continually getting people off, out of all kinds of scrapes."

"But, my dear fellow—*Saffron Hill*—Low, that ; low, 'pon my soul ! Never was near it in my life."

"But they live there to be near the thieves. Lud, the thieves couldn't do without 'em! But what's that to

you? You know 'a very dirty ugly toad has often got a jewel in his belly,' so Shakspeare or some one says. Isn't it enough for *you*, Tit, if they can make good their advertisement? Let's off, Tit—let's off, I say; for you mayn't be able to get there to-morrow—your employers!——"

"My employers! Do you think, Hucky, I'm going back to business after this?"

"Suppose it all turns out moonshine."

"Lord, but I won't suppose it! It makes me sick to think of nothing coming of it! Let's go off at once, and see what's to be done!"

So Huckaback put the newspaper in his pocket, blew out the candle, and the two started on their important errand. It was well that their means had been too limited to allow of their indulging to a greater extent than a glass of port-wine negus (that was the name under which they drank the "*publican's* port"—*i. e.* a decoction of oak bark, logwood shavings, and a little brandy) between them; otherwise, excited as were the feelings of each of them by the discovery of the evening, they must in all probability have been guilty of some piece of extravagance in the streets. As it was, they talked very loudly as they went along, and in a tone of conversation pitched a little too high for their present circumstances, however in unison it might be with the expected circumstances of *one* of them.

In due time they reached the residence of which they were in search. It was a large house, infinitely superior to all its dingy neighbours; and on a bright brass-plate, a yard long at least, and a foot wide, stood the awe-inspiring words, "Quirk, Gammon, & Snap, Solicitors."

"Now, Tit," whispered Huckaback, after they had paused for a second or two—"now for it—pluck up a sperrit—ring!"

"I—I—feel all of a sudden uncommon funky—I think that last cigar of yours wasn't——"

"Stuff, Tit—ring away! ring away! Faint heart never wins!"

"Well, it must be done; so—here goes, at any rate!" and with a short nervous jerk he caused a startling clatter within, which was so distinctly audible without, that both of

them instinctively *hemmed*, as if to drown the noise which was so much greater than they had expected. In a very few moments they heard some one undoing the fastenings of the door, and the gentlemen looked at one another with an expression of mingled expectation and apprehension. A little old woman at length stood before them, with a candle in her hand.

"Who are you?" she exclaimed crustily.

"Is this Messrs.—what is it, Huck?—Oh! Messrs. Quirk & Co.'s?" inquired Titmouse, tapping the end of his cane against his chin, with a desperate effort to appear at his ease.

"Why, where are your eyes? I should think you might have seen what was wrote on this here plate—it's large enough, one could have thought, to be read by them as can read? What's your business?"

"We want—Give us the paper, Hucky"—he added, addressing his companion, who produced it in a moment; and Titmouse would have proceeded to possess the old woman of all his little heart, when she cut him short by saying, snappishly—"They aren't none on 'em in; nor never is on Sundays—so you'll just call to-morrow, if you wants 'em. What's your names?"

"Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse," answered that gentleman, with very particular emphasis on every syllable.

"Mr. *Who?*" exclaimed the old woman, opening her eyes, and raising her hand to the back of her ear. Mr. Titmouse repeated his name more loudly and distinctly.

"Tippetitippety!—what's that?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Titmouse peevishly; "I said Mr. Tit-el-bat Titmouse!—Will that suit?"

"Tick-a-tick-a-tick. Well, gracious! if ever I heard such a name. Oh!—I see you're making a fool of me! Get off, or I'll call a constable in. Get along with you, you couple of puppies! Is this the way——"

"I tell you," said Mr. Huckaback, "that this gentleman's name is Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse; and you'd better take care what you're at, old woman, for we've come on business of vital consequence."

"I dare say it'll keep till to-morrow."

The friends consulted for a moment, and then Tit-

mouse asked if he might go in and write a letter to Messrs. Quirk.

"No," said she; "how do I know who you are? There's a public house close by, where you may write what you like, and bring it here, and they'll get it the first thing in the morning. So that's what you may take away with you!"—with which the complaisant old janitrix shut the door in their faces.

"Huck, I'm afraid there's nothing in it," said Titmouse despondingly, to his friend—both of them remaining rooted to the spot.

"Oudacious old toad!" muttered Huckaback, indignantly

"If there was any thing in it," said Titmouse, with a deep sigh, "they must have made a deal of talk about it in the house; and this old thing must have heard my name often enough. It ain't so common a name, is it?"

"I—I own I don't half like the looks of it," replied his friend, putting his newspaper into his pocket again; "but we'll try if we can't write a letter to sound 'em, and so far take the old creature's advice. Here's the public-house she told us of. Come, let's see what's to be done?"

Titmouse, greatly depressed, followed his friend; and they soon provided themselves with two glasses of stout, and implements for writing. That they made good use of their time and materials, let the following epistle prove. It was their joint composition, and here is an exact copy of it:—

"To Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

"Sir,

"Your Names being put in an Advertisement in this present *Sunday Flash*, Newspaper of to Day's Date, Mr. T. T. begs to inform your respectable House I feel anxious to speak with them on this *truly interesting subject*, seeing it mentions the Name of Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, which two last Names of that Deceased Person *my own name is*, which I can any Day (as soon as possible) call and prove to you, by telling you the Same, truly. He being Engaged in Business during the week very close for the Present, I hope that if they Have any thing particular to say to Him, they will write to Me

without the least Delay, and please address, T. T., at Dowlas and Co.'s, No. 375, Oxford Street, Post-Paid, which will ensure its being duly Taken In by my Employers, and am, Gents,

"Yours obediently,

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE.

"P. S.—My Friend, that is with me writing This, (Mr. Robert Huckaback,) can prove who I am if Necessitated to do so.

"N. B.—Shall have no objection to do the Liberal Thing if any thing suitable Turns up of it. T. T.

"*Sunday Evening*, 9|7|183–.

"Forgot to Say, I am the only Child of my Honoured Parents, who died; before I knew them in Lawful Wedloc, and was 27 last Birth Day, Never having Seen your Advertisement till this Night, wh, if Necessary can prove."

This perspicuous and truly elegant performance having been thrice subjected to the critical examination of the friends, was then folded up, and directed to "Messrs. Quirk and Co.," a great straggling wet wafer having first been put upon it. It was safely deposited, a few minutes afterwards, with the old woman of the house, and then the two West-End gentlemen hastened away from that truly plebeian part of the town. Under four different gaslights did they stop, take out a newspaper, and spell over the advertisement; by which ingenious process they at length succeeded in satisfying themselves that there was something in it. They parted, however, with a considerable abatement of the excitement with which they had set out on the voyage of discovery.

Mr. Titmouse did not, on reaching his room, take off and lay aside his precious Sunday apparel with his accustomed care and deliberation. On the contrary, he peeled them off, as it were, and threw himself on the bed as quickly as possible, in order that he might calmly revolve the immense event of the day in his mind, which it had agitated like a stone thrown into a stagnant pool by the roadside. Oh, how restless was he!—not more so could he have been had he lain between horse-hair sheets.

He repeatedly got up and walked two or three steps, which were all that his room admitted of, and then sunk into bed again—but not to sleep, till four or five o'clock; having nevertheless to rise at half-past six, to resume his detested duties at Dowlas and Co.s', whose shop he assisted in opening at seven o'clock as usual. When he and his shopmates were sitting together at breakfast, he could not help letting out a little, vaguely and mysteriously, about "something that might happen in the course of the day;" and thereby succeeded in satisfying his companions that he expected the visit of a policeman, for some row he had been concerned in over night. Well, eight, nine, ten o'clock wore away heavily, and nothing transpired, alas! to vary the monotonous duties in which Mr. Titmouse was engaged; bale after bale, and package after package, he took down and put up again, at the bidding of pretty capricious customers; silk, satin, bombazines, crapes, muslins, ribands, gloves, he assisted in displaying and disposing of as usual; but it is certain that his powerful understanding could no longer settle itself as before, upon his responsible and arduous duties; every other minute, he cast a feverish furtive glance towards the door. He almost dropped at one time, as a postman crossed from the opposite side of the street, as if to enter their shop—then passing on immediately, however, to the next door. Not a person, in short, entered the premises, that he did not scrutinize narrowly and anxiously but in vain. No—buying and selling was the order of the day, as usual!—eleven o'clock struck and he sighed. "You don't seem well," said a pretty young woman, to whom, in a somewhat absent manner, he was exhibiting and describing the qualities of some cambric. "Oh—ye—es, uncommon!" he replied; "never better, ma'am, than when so well employed," accompanying the latter words with what he conceived to be a very arch, but which was in fact a very impudent look at his fair customer. At that moment, a voice called out to him from the further end of the shop near the door—"Titmouse wanted!"

"Coming!" he shouted, turning as white as the cambric he held in his hands—which became suddenly cold and clammy; while his heart went thump, thump, as he

hastily exclaimed, to the astonished lady, "Excuse me, ma'am, if you please—Jones," to the shopman next him, "will you attend to this lady?" and he hastened whither he had been called, amidst a prevalent grin and "hem!" from his companions on each side as he passed along the shop, till he reached a middle-aged gentlemanly-looking person standing near the door, and bowed to him.

"Mr. Titmouse?" inquired the stranger, blandly.

"The same, sir, at your service," replied Titmouse, trembling involuntarily all over. The stranger slightly inclined towards him, and—still more slightly—touched his hat; fixing on him, at the same time, an inquisitive penetrating eye that really abashed him.

"You left—you favoured us by leaving a note at our office last night, addressed to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap?" he inquired, lowering his voice to a whisper.

"Yes, sir, hoping it was no"——

"Pray, Mr. Titmouse, can we be alone for about five or ten minutes?"

"I—I—don't exactly know, *here*, sir; I'm afraid it's against the rules of the house—but—I'll ask. Here *is* Mr. Tagrag. May I step into the cloak-room with this gentleman for a few minutes, sir?" he continued, addressing his imperious employer, who, with a pen behind his right ear, his left hand in his breeches pocket, and his right hand impatiently tweedling about his watch seals, had followed Titmouse, on hearing him inquired for in the manner I have described, and stood at a yard or two's distance, eyeing the two with a fussy dissatisfied look, wondering what on earth any one *could* want with one of his young men.

As Mr. Tagrag will figure a little on my canvass by-and-by, I may as well here give the reader a slight sketch of that gentleman. He was about fifty-two years old; a great tyrant in his little way; a compound of ignorance, selfishness, and conceit. He knew nothing on earth except the price of his goods, and how to make the most of his business. He was of middle size, with a tendency to corpulence; and almost invariably wore a black coat and waistcoat, a white neck-handkerchief very firmly tied, and gray trowsers. He had a dull gray eye, with white eyelashes, and no eyebrows; a forehead that seemed ashamed

of his face, it retreated so far and so abruptly back from it; his face was pretty deeply pitted with the small-pox; his nose—or rather semblance of a nose—consisted of two great nostrils looking at you as it were, impudently—out of the middle of his face; there was a perfectly level space from cheekbone to cheekbone; his whiskers, neatly and closely cut, came in points to each corner of his mouth, which was a very large, shapeless, sensual-looking affair. This may serve, for the present, to give you an idea of the man who had contrived to excite towards himself the hatred and contempt of every body over whom he had any control.

"You know we never allow any thing of the sort," was his short reply, in a very disagreeable tone and manner, to the modest request of Titmouse, as above mentioned.

"May I beg the favour of a few minutes' private conversation with Mr. Titmouse," said the stranger, politely, "on a matter of the last importance to him? My name, sir, is Gammon, and I am a solicitor."

"Why, sir," answered Tagrag, somewhat cowed by the calm and gentlemanly, but at the same time decisive manner of Mr. Gammon—"it's really very inconvenient, and decidedly against the rules of the house, for any of my young men to be absent on business of their own, during *my* business hours; but—I suppose—what must be, must be—I'll give him ten minutes—he'd better not stay longer," looking significantly first at his watch, and then at Titmouse. "It's only for the sake of the other young men, sir. In a large establishment like ours, we're obliged, you know, sir," &c., &c., &c., he added, in a low cringing tone, deprecatory of the contemptuous air with which he *felt* that Mr. Gammon was regarding him. That gentleman, with a slight bow, and a supercilious smile, presently quitted the shop, accompanied by Titmouse.

"How far do you live from this place, Mr. Titmouse?" he inquired as soon as they had got into the street.

"Not four minutes' walk, sir; but hem!" he was flustered at the idea of showing so eminent a person into his wretched room—"Suppose we were to step into this tavern here, sir—I dare say they've a room at our service——"

"Pray, allow me to ask, Mr. Titmouse,—have you any private papers—family writings, or things of that sort, at your rooms?"

Titmouse seemed considering.

"I—I think I have, sir—one or two—but they're of no consequence."

"Are you a judge, Mr. Titmouse?" inquired Mr. Gammon, with a smile; "pray let us, my dear sir, at once to your rooms—time is very short and valuable. I should vastly like to look at these same insignificant papers of yours!"

In less than two minutes' further time, Mr. Gammon was sitting at Titmouse's little rickety round table, at his lodgings, with a sheet of paper, and his pens and portable inkstand before him, asking him a number of questions concerning his birth and family connexions, and taking down his answers very carefully—perhaps almost word for word. Mr. Titmouse was quite surprised at the knowledge which Mr. Gammon possessed of the family history of the Titmouses. As for papers, &c., Mr. Titmouse succeeded in producing four or five old letters and memoranda from the bottom of his trunk, and the fly-leaf of a Bible of his father's, which he did not recollect having opened before for very many years, and of which said entries, till pressed on the subject by Mr. Gammon, he had been hardly even aware of the existence. With these several documents Mr. Gammon was so much struck that he proposed to take them away with him, for better and more leisurely examination, and safer custody, at their office; but Mr. Titmouse significantly hinted at his very recent acquaintance with Mr. Gammon, who, he intimated, was at liberty to come and make exact copies of them whenever he pleased, in his (Mr. Titmouse's) presence.

"Oh, certainly—yes," replied Mr. Gammon, slightly colouring at the distrust implied by this observation; "I applaud your caution, Mr. Titmouse. By all means keep them, and most carefully; because, (I do not say that they *are*,) but it is quite possible, that they may become rather valuable."

"Thank you, sir: and now, hoping you'll excuse the liberty, I should uncommonly like to know what all this means—what is to turn up out of it all?"

"The law, my dear sir, is proverbially uncertain——"

"Oh, Lord! but the law can give me a *hint*——"

"*The law never hints*," interrupted Mr. Gammon, impressively, with a bland smile.

"Well then, how did you come, sir, to know that there ever was such a person as Mr. Gabriel Titmouse? I suppose he is my great uncle, and what can come from him, if he was only a bit of a shoemaker?"

"Ah, yes—exactly; those are very interesting questions."

"Yes, sir; and them and a great many more I was going to ask long ago, but I saw you were——"

"Sir, I perceive that we have positively been absent from your place of business nearly an hour—your employers will be getting rather impatient."

"Meaning no offence, sir—bother *their* impatience; *I'm* impatient, I assure you, to know what all this means. Come, sir, see how openly I have told you every thing."

"Why, certainly, you see, Mr. Titmouse," said Gammon, with an agreeable smile—(it was that smile of his that had been the making of Gammon)—"it is only candid in me to acknowledge that your curiosity is perfectly reasonable; and I see no difficulty in admitting that *I have* had a motive——"

"Yes, sir—and all that—*I* know, sir,"—hastily interrupted Titmouse, but without irritating or disturbing the placid speaker.

"And that we waited with some anxiety for the result of our advertisement."

"Ah, you can't escape from *that*, you know, sir!" interposed Titmouse, with a confident air.

"But it is a maxim with us, my dear sir, never to be premature in any thing, especially when it may be very prejudicial; you've really no idea, my dear Mr. Titmouse, of the world of mischief that is often done by precipitancy in legal matters; and in the present step of the business—the present stage, my dear sir—I really do see it necessary not to—do any thing premature, and without consulting my partners."

"Lord, sir!" exclaimed Titmouse, getting more and more irritated and impatient as he reflected on the length of his absence from Dowlas & Co.'s.

"I quite feel for your anxiety—so perfectly natural——"

"Oh, dear sir! if you'd only tell me the *least bit*——"

"If, my dear sir, I were to disclose just now the exact object we had in writing that advertisement in the papers——"

"How did you come to know of it at all, sir? Come, there can't be any harm."

"Not the least, my dear sir. It was in the course of business—in the course of business."

"Is it money that's been left me—or—any thing of that sort?"

"It quite pains me, I assure you, Mr. Titmouse—I think, by the way"—added Gammon, suddenly, as something occurred to him of their previous conversation, which he was not sure of—"you told me that that Bible was given you by your father."

"Oh yes, sir! yes—no doubt of it; surely *that* can't signify, seeing he is dead, and I'm his only son?" asked Titmouse, quickly and eagerly.

"Oh, 'tis only a circumstance—a mere circumstance; but in business, you know, Mr. Titmouse, every little helps."

"Why, meaning no offence, sir, I can't abide being put off in this kind of way. See what I've told you—you've told me nothing at all. I hope you haven't been only making me a cat's-paw of? I hate being made a cat's-paw of, sir!"

"Gracious, Mr. Titmouse! how can you imagine it! You are at this moment the object of a considerable share of our anxiety——"

"Not meaning it rudely, sir—please to tell me at once, plainly, am I to be the better for any thing you're now about?"

"That may or may not be, sir," answered Gammon, in the same imperturbable manner, drawing on his gloves, and rising from his chair. "In justice to yourself, and other parties concerned——"

"Oh! is any body to *share* in it?" exclaimed Titmouse, alarmedly.

"I am sure," said Gammon, smiling, "that you will give us credit for consulting your best interests. We sin-

cerely desire to advance them; and this matter occupies a good deal of our time and anxiety. It—is *really*," looking at his watch, "an hour since we quitted your place of business—I fear I shall get into disgrace with your employers. Will you favour us with a call at our office to-morrow night, when the business of the day is over? When do you quit at night?"

"About a quarter to ten, sir; but, really—to-morrow night! Couldn't I come to-night, sir?"

"Not to-night, I fear, my dear sir. We have a very important engagement. Let us say to-morrow night, at a quarter past ten—shall we say that hour?"

"Well, sir, if not before—yes—I'll be with you. But I *must* say——"

"Good-day, Mr. Titmouse." They were by this time in Oxford Street again. "Good-day, my dear sir—good-day—to-morrow night, as soon after ten as possible—eh? Good-by."

This was all that Mr. Titmouse could get out of Mr. Gammon, who, hailing a coach off the stand beside them, popped into it, and it was soon making its way eastward. What a miserable mixture of doubts, hopes, and fears, had Mr. Gammon left Titmouse! He felt as if he were like a squeezed orange; he had told every thing he knew about himself, and got nothing in return out of the smooth, imperturbable, impenetrable Mr. Gammon, but empty civilities.—"Lord, Lord!" thought Titmouse, as Mr. Gammon's coach turned the corner; "what would I give to know half about it that that man knows! But, Mr. Tagrag! good gracious! what will he say? It's struck twelve. I've been an hour away—and he gave me ten minutes! Sha'n't I catch it?"

And he did. Almost the very first person he met, on entering the shop; was his respected employer, Mr. Tagrag, who, plucking his watch out of his fob, and, looking furiously at it, motioned the trembling Titmouse to follow him to the farther end of the long shop, where there happened to be then no customers.

"Is this your ten minutes, sir, eh?"

"I am sorry——"

"Where the devil have you been, sir?"

"With that gentleman, sir, and I really did not know—"

"You didn't know, sir! Who cares what you know, or don't know? You know you ought to have been back fifty-five minutes ago, sir. You do, sir! Isn't your time my property, sir? Don't I pay for it, sir? An hour!—in the middle of the day! My God! I've not had such a thing happen this five years! I'll stop it out of your salary, sir."

Titmouse did not attempt to interrupt him.

"What have you been gossiping about, sir?"

"Something that he wanted to say to me, sir."

"Impudence!—do you suppose I don't see your impertinence? I *insist*, sir, in knowing what all this gossiping with that fellow has been about?"

"Then you *won't* know, sir," replied Titmouse, doggedly; returning to his usual station behind the counter.

"You won't!!"

"No, sir, you sha'n't know a single word about it."

"Sha'n't know a single word about it! My God! Do you know whom you're talking to, sir? Do you really know who I am, sir? whom you are speaking to, sir?"

"Mr. Tagrag, I presume, of the firm of Dowlas, Tagrag, & Co."—one or two of his companions near him, almost turned pale at the audacity he was displaying.

"And who are you, sir, that dare to presume to bandy words with ME, sir?" inquired Tagrag, quivering with rage.

"Tittlebat Titmouse, at your service," was the answer, in a glib tone, and with a sufficiently saucy air.

"You heard that, I hope!" inquired Tagrag with forced calmness, of a pale-faced young man, the nearest to him.

"Ye—es," was the meekly reluctant answer.

"This day month you leave, sir!" said Mr. Tagrag, solemnly—as if conscious that he was passing a sort of sentence of death upon the presumptuous delinquent.

"Very well, Mr. Tagrag—any thing that pleases you pleases your humble servant. I *will* go this day month, and welcome—I've long wished——"

"Then you *sha'n't* leave, sir," said Tagrag, furiously.

"But I will, sir. You've given me warning; and, if you haven't, now I give *you* warning," replied Titmouse; turning, however, very pale, and experiencing a certain sudden sinking of the heart—for this was a serious and

most unlooked-for event, and for a while put out of his head all the agitating thoughts of the last few hours. Poor Titmouse had enough to bear—what with the delicate raillery and banter of his accomplished companions for the rest of the day, and the galling tyranny of Mr. Tagrag, who dogged about him all day, setting him about the most menial and troublesome offices he could, and constantly saying mortifying things to him, before customers, and the state of miserable suspense in which Mr. Gammon had thought fit to leave him: I say that surely all this was enough for him to bear without having to encounter at night, as he did, on his return to his lodgings, his blustering landlady, who vowed that if she sold him out and out she'd be put off no longer—and his pertinacious and melancholy tailor, who, with sallow unshaven face, told him of five children at home, all ill of the small-pox, and his wife in an hospital—and he *implored* a payment on account. This sufferer succeeded in squeezing out of Titmouse seven shillings on account, and his landlady extorted ten; which staved off a distress—direful word—for some week or two longer; and so they left him in the possession of eight shillings, or so, to last till next quarter-day. He sighed heavily, barred his door, and sat down opposite his little table, on which was nothing but a solitary thin candle, and on which his eyes rested unconsciously, till the stench of it, burning right down in the socket, roused him from his wretched revery. He then hastily threw off his clothes, and flung himself on his bed, to pass a far more dismal night than he had known for years.

He ran the gauntlet at Messrs. Dowlas, Tagrag, & Co.'s all Tuesday, as he had done on the day preceding. One should have supposed that when his companions beheld him persecuted by their common employer and master, whom they all equally hated, they would have made common cause with their suffering companion, or at all events given no countenance to his persecution; yet it was far otherwise. Without stopping to analyze the feeling which produced it, (and which the moderately reflective reader may easily analyze for himself if so disposed,) I am grieved to have to say, that when all the young men saw that Tagrag would be gratified by their

cutting poor Titmouse, who, with all his little vanities and emptiness, had never offended or injured any of them—they did so; and, when Tagrag observed it, his miserable mind was more gratified with them by far than it had ever been before. He spoke to all of them with unusual blandness; to the sinner, Titmouse, with augmented bitterness.

A few minutes after ten o'clock that night, a gentle ringing of the bell of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap's office, announced the arrival of poor Titmouse. The door was quickly opened by a clerk, who seemed in the act of quitting for the night.

"Ah—Mr. Titmouse, I presume?" he inquired, with a kind of deference in his manner that Titmouse had never been accustomed to.

"The same, sir—Tittlebat Titmouse."

"Oh! allow me, sir, to conduct you in to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, who are, I know, in expectation of seeing you. It is very rarely that they are here at so late an hour." With this he led the way to an inner room, and opening a green-baize door in the further side of it, announced Mr. Titmouse, and left him—sufficiently flustered. Three gentlemen were sitting at a large table, on which he saw, by the strong but circumscribed light of two large shaded candlesticks, were lying a great number of papers and parchments. The three gentlemen rose when he entered, and Mr. Gammon came and shook hands with him.

"Mr. Titmouse, let me introduce you to Mr. Quirk"—this was the senior partner, a short, stout, elderly gentleman, with a shining baldhead and white hair, and sharp black eyes, and who looked very earnestly at him—"and Mr. Snap"—this was the junior partner, having recently been promoted to be such after ten years' service in the office of managing clerk; he was about thirty, particularly well dressed, slight, active, and with a face like a terrier, *so* hard, sharp, and wiry!—Mr. Gammon himself was about forty, very genteel, with a ready bow, insinuating smile, and low tone of voice; his look withal, acute and cautious.

"A seat, Mr. Titmouse," said Mr. Quirk, placing a chair for him, on which he sat down, they resuming theirs.

"Punctual, Mr. Titmouse!" exclaimed Mr. Gammon, with a smile; "more so than I fear you were yesterday, after our long interview, eh? Pray what did that worthy person, Mr. Ragbag, say, on your return?"

"Say, gents?"—(he tried to clear his throat, for he spoke somewhat more thickly, and his heart beat more perceptibly than usual)—"I'm ruined by it, and no mistake."

"Ruined! I'm sorry to hear it," interposed Mr. Gammon, with a concerned air.

"I am indeed, sir. Such a towering rage as he has been in ever since; and he's given me warning to go on the 10th of next month." He thought he observed a faint smile flit over the faces of all three.

"He has indeed!"

"Dear me, Mr. Titmouse—what cause did he allege for dismissing you?" keenly inquired Mr. Quirk.

"Yes—"

"What?"

"Stopping out longer than I was allowed, and refusing to tell him what this gentleman and I had been talking about."

"Don't think that'll do; sure it wont!" briskly exclaimed Mr. Snap; "no just cause, that," and he jumped up, whisked down a book from the shelves behind him, and eagerly turned over the leaves.

"Never mind that now, Mr. Snap," said Mr. Quirk, rather petulantly; "surely we have other matters to talk about to-night."

"Asking pardon, sir, but I think it does matter to me, sir," interposed Titmouse; "for on the 10th of next month I'm a beggar—being next door to it *now*."

"Not quite, we trust," said Mr. Gammon.

"But Mr. Tagrag said he'd make me as good as one."

"That's evidence to show malice," again eagerly interjected Mr. Snap, who was again tartly rebuffed by Mr. Quirk; even Mr. Gammon turning towards him with a surprised—"Really, Mr. Snap!"

"So Mr. Tagrag said he'd make you a beggar?" inquired Mr. Quirk.

"He vowed he would, sir!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Quirk and Mr. Gammon—

but such a laugh!—not careless, or hearty, but subdued with a dash of deference in it.

"Well—it perhaps may not signify much by that time;" and he laughed again, followed by the soft laugh of Mr. Gammon, and a kind of sharp quick sound like a bark, from Mr. Snap.

"But, gents, you'll excuse me if I say I think it *does* signify to *me*, and an't any laughing matter! Without being rude, I'd rather come to business, if there's any to be done, without this laughing at me."

"Laughing at you! my dear sir,—no, no!" exclaimed all three in a breath—"laughing *with* you," said Mr. Quirk! "By the time you mention, you may perhaps be able to laugh at Mr. Ragbag, and every body else, for——"

[—"Why should we mince the matter?" he whispered, in a low tone, to Mr. Gammon, who nodded acquiescence, and fixed his eyes earnestly on Titmouse.]

"I really think we are warranted in preparing to expect by that time an extraordinary change in your circumstances." Titmouse began to tremble violently, and his hands were bedewed with a cold moisture.

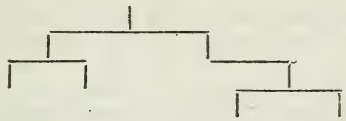
"I hear, sir," he murmured: and he also heard a faint ringing in his ears.

"In all human probability, Mr. Titmouse," continued Mr. Quirk, himself a little excited with the important communication that trembled on the tip of his tongue, "you will ere long be put into possession of somewhere about Ten Thousand a-year."

The words seemed to have struck Titmouse blind—as he saw nothing for some moments; then every thing seemed swimming around him, and he felt a sort of faintness or sickness stealing over him. They had hardly been prepared for their communications affecting their visiter so powerfully. Mr. Snap hastened out and in with a glass of water; and the earnest attentions of the three soon restored Mr. Titmouse to his senses. It was a good while, however, before he could appreciate the little conversation which they now and then addressed to him, or estimate the full importance of the astounding event Mr. Quirk had just communicated. "May I make free to ask

for a little brandy and water, gents? I feel all over in a kind of tremble, said he, some half an hour afterwards."

"Yes—by all means, Mr. Titmouse. Mr. Snap, will you be kind enough to order Betty to bring in a glass of brandy and water from the Jolly Thieves, next door?"—Snap shot out, gave the order, and returned in a trice. The old woman, in a few minutes' time followed, with a large tumbler of dark brandy and water, quite hot, for which Mr. Gammon apologized, but Mr. Titmouse said he preferred it so—and soon addressed himself to the inspiriting mixture. It quickly manifested its influence, reassuring him wonderfully. As he sat sipping it, Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap being engaged in an earnest conversation, of which he could understand little or nothing, he had leisure to look about him, and observed that there was lying before them a large sheet of paper, at which all of them often and earnestly looked, filled with lines, so—



with writing at the ends of each of them, and round and square figures. When he saw them all bending over and scrutinizing this mysterious object, it puzzled him (and many a better head than his has a pedigree puzzled before) sorely, and he began to suspect it was a sort of conjuring-paper!—

"I hope, gents, that paper's all right—eh?" said he supported by the brandy, which he had nearly finished. They turned towards him with a smile of momentary surprise, and then—

"We hope so—a vast deal depends on it," said Mr. Quirk, looking over his glasses at Titmouse. Now what he had hinted at, as far as he could venture to do so, was a thought that glanced across his as yet unsettled brain, that there might have been invoked more than *mere earthly assistance;* but he prudently pressed the matter no farther, that was all Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap's look out; he had been no party to any thing of the sort, nor would he knowingly; he also observed the

same sheets of paper written all over, which Mr. Gammon had filled at his (Titmouse's) room, the day before; and many new and more odd-looking papers and parchments. Sometimes they addressed questions to him, but found it somewhat difficult to keep his attention up to any thing that was said to him for the wild visions that were chasing one another through his heated brain; the passage of which said visions was not a little accelerated by the large tumbler of brandy and water which he had just taken.

"Then in fact," said Mr. Gammon, as the three simultaneously sat down, after having been for some time standing poring over the paper before Mr. Quirk. "Tittlebat's title accrued in 1818?"

"Precisely so," said Mr. Quirk emphatically.

"To be sure," confidently added Snap; who having devoted himself exclusively all his life to the sharpest practice of the common law as it is called, knew about as much real property law as a snip—but it would not do to appear ignorant, or taking no part in the matter, in the presence of the heir at law, and the future great client of the House.

"Well, Mr. Titmouse," at length said Mr. Quirk, laying aside his glasses—"you are likely to be one of the luckiest men of your day! We may be mistaken, but it appears to us that your right is clear, and has been clear these ten or twelve years, to the immediate enjoyment of a very fine estate in the north of England, worth some £9000 or £10,000 a-year, at the least!"

"You don't say so!"

"We do, indeed; and are very proud and happy indeed to be the honoured instruments of establishing your rights, my dear sir," said Mr. Gammon.

"Then all the money that's been spent this ten or twelve years is my money, is it?"

"If we are right it is undoubtedly as you say," answered Mr. Quirk.

"There'll be a jolly reckoning for some one, then, shortly—eh? My eyes!"

"Ah, my dear Mr. Titmouse!" cried Mr. Gammon, with subdued ecstacy, as before his mind's eye rose visions of interminable proceedings at law and in equity—hundreds upon hundreds of portly, red tape-tied "cases," "briefs,"

and "motion papers," with *Quirk, Gammon, and Snap*, at the bottom of each of them, and constantly under the eye of the court and the bar, and before the public—(the same kind of thoughts must have passed through Snap's mind, for he rubbed his hands in silence with an excited air)—

"My dear Mr. Titmouse, you have a most just regard for your own interests: there *will* be a reckoning, and a very terrible one, ere long, for somebody—but we've time enough for all that! Only let us have the unspeakable happiness of seeing you once fairly in possession of your estates, and our office shall know no rest till you have got all you are entitled to—every farthing even!"

"Oh, never fear our letting them rest!" said Mr. Quirk, judiciously accommodating himself to the taste and apprehension of his excited auditor—"Those that must give up the goose, must give up the giblets also—ha, ha, ha!" Messrs. Gammon and Snap echoed the laugh, and enjoyed the joke of the head of the firm.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Titmouse, immensely excited by the conjoint influence of the brandy and the news of the night, "capital! capital! hurrah! Such goings on there will be! You're all of the right sort, I see! Law for ever! Let me shake hands with you all, gents! Come, if you please, all together! all friends to-night?"

And he grasped each of the three readily-proffered right hands of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, with an energy that was likely to make all the high contracting parties to that quadruple alliance remember its ratification.

"And is it all a ready-money affair, gents—or rent, and all *that* kind of thing?"

"Why, almost entirely the latter," answered Quirk, "except the accumulations."

"Then I'm a great landlord, am I?"

"Indeed, my dear Mr. Titmouse, you are—(that is, unless we have made a blunder such as our house is not often in the habit of making) and have two very fine houses in different parts of the country."

"Capital! delightful! I'll live in both of them—such goings on! And is it *quite* up to the mark of 10,000*l.* a-year?"

"We really entertain no doubt."

"And such as I can spend all of it, every year?"

"Certainly—no doubt of it—not the least. The rents are paid with most exemplary—at least," added Mr. Gammon, with a captivating and irresistible smile, and taking him affectionately by the hand—"at least they *will* be, as soon as we have them fairly in our management."

"Oh, *you're* to get it all in for me, are you?" he inquired briskly. The three partners bowed, with the most deprecatingly disinterested air in the world, intimating that, for *his* sake, they were ready to take upon themselves even that troublesome responsibility.

"Capital! couldn't be better! couldn't be better! Ah, ha, ha—you've catched the goose, and must bring me its eggs. Ah, ha, ha! a touch in *your* line, old gents?"

"Ha, ha, ha! excellent! ah, ha, ha!" laughed the three partners at the wit of their new client. Mr. Titmouse joined them, and snapped his fingers in the air.

"Lord—I've just thought of Dowlas, Tagrag and Company's—I seem as if I hadn't seen or heard of them for Lord knows how long!—but there they are!—fancy old Tagrag making me a beggar on the tenth of next month—ha, ha, ha!—sha'n't see that d—d hob any more."

"There?" whispered Mr. Gammon, apprehensively, in the ear of Mr. Quirk; "didn't I tell you that that would be it? We've been monstrously foolish and premature."

"It won't do to go back to that—eugh! eh? will it?—you know what I mean! Fancy Tittlebat Titmouse standing behind——"

The partners looked rather blank.

"We could venture to suggest, Mr. Titmouse," said Mr. Gammon, seriously, "*the absolute necessity* there is for every thing on your part and our parts to go on as quietly as before, for a little time to come; to be sure and safe, my dear sir, we must be *secret*."

"Oh, I see, gents! I see; mum—mum's the word, for the present! But, I *must* say, if there is any one whom I want to hear of it sooner than another, it's"——

"Dowdy, Ragbag, and Co., I suppose! ha, ha, ha!" interrupted Mr. Gammon, his partners echoing his laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha! Cuss the cats—that's it—ha, ha, ha!" echoed Mr. Titmouse; who, getting up out of his chair, could not resist capering to and fro in something of the

attitude of a stage-dancer, whistling and humming by turns, and indulging in various other wild antics.

"And now, gents, to do a bit of business—when am I to *begin* scattering the shiners, eh?" he inquired, interrupting an earnest, low-toned conversation between the partners.

"Oh, of course some delay is unavoidable. All we have done, as yet, is to discover that, as far as we are advised, and can judge, you are the right owner; but very extensive operations must be immediately commenced, before you can be put in possession. There are some who won't be persuaded to drop £10,000 a-year out of their hands for the mere asking."

"The devil there are! *Who* are they that want to keep me any longer out of what's my own—what's justly mine? Eh? I want to know! Haven't they kept me out long enough?—d——n'm! Put 'em in prison directly—don't spare 'em—rascals!"

"They'll probably ere long, find their way in that direction—for, however he's to make up, poor devil, the mesne profits"——

"Mean profits!—is that all you call them, gents? It's rogue's money—villain's profits! So don't spare 'em—he's robbed the fatherless, which I am, and an orphan! Keep me out of what's mine, indeed! D——d if he shall, though!"

"My dear Mr. Titmouse," said Gammon gravely, "we are getting on too fast—dreadfully too fast. It will never do: matters of such immense importance as these cannot be hurried on, or talked of, in this way."

"I like that, sir!—I do, d——e!"

"You will, really, if you go on in this wild way, Mr. Titmouse, make us regret the trouble we have taken in the affair, and especially the promptness with which we have communicated to you the extent of your good fortune."

"Beg pardon, I'm sure, gents, but mean no offence; am monstrous obliged to you for what you've done for me—but, by Jove, it's taken me rather a-back, I own, to hear that I'm to be kept so long out of it all. Why can't you offer him, whoever he is that has my property, a handsome sum to go out at once? Gents, I'll own to

you I'm most uncommon low—never so low in my life—d——d low! Done up, and can't get what's justly mine! What am I to do in the meanwhile? Consider that, gents."

"You are rather excited just now, Mr. Titmouse," said Mr. Quirk, seriously; "suppose we now break up, and resume our conversation to-morrow, when we are all in better and calmer trim!"

"No, sir, thanking you all the same; but I think we'd better go on with it now," replied Titmouse, impetuously. "Do you think I can stoop to go back to that nasty, beastly shop, and stand behind the counter!"

"Our *decided* opinion, Mr. Titmouse," said Mr. Quirk, emphatically—his other partners getting very grave in their looks—"that is, if our opinion is worth offering"——

"That remains to be seen," said Titmouse, with a pettish shake of the head.

"Well, such as it is, we offer it you; and it is, that for many reasons you continue, for a little while longer, in your present situation."

"What! own Tagrag for my master—and I worth £10,000 a-year!"

"My dear sir, you've not got it yet."

"Do you think you'd have told me what you have, if you weren't sure! No, no! you've gone too far! I shall burst, I shall! Me go on as before!—they use me worse and worse every day. Gents, you'll excuse me—I hope you will; but business is business, gents—it is, and if you won't do mine, I must look out for them that will—'pon my soul, I must, and"—If Mr. Titmouse could have seen, or having seen, appreciated, the looks which the three partners interchanged, on hearing this absurd, ungrateful, and insolent speech of his—the expression that flitted across their shrewd faces; that was, intense contempt for him, hardly overmastered and concealed by a vivid perception of their own interests, which was, of course, to *manage*, to soothe, to conciliate him!

How the reptile propensities of his mean nature had thriven beneath the sudden sunshine of unexpected prosperity!—See already his selfishness, truculence, rapacity, in full play!

"So, gents," said he, after a long and keen expostulation with them on the same subject, "I'm to go to-morrow

morning to Dowlas and Co.'s, and to go on with the cursed life I led there to-day, all as if nothing had happened!"

"In your present humour, Mr. Titmouse, it would be in vain to discuss the matter," said Mr. Quirk. "Again I tell you that the course we have recommended is, in our opinion, the proper one; excuse me if I add, what *can* you do but adopt our advice!"

"Why, hang me, if I won't employ somebody else—that's flat! So, good night, gents; you'll find that Tittlebat Titmouse isn't to be trifled with!" So saying, Mr. Titmouse clapped his hat on his head, bounced out of the room, and, no attempt being made to stop him, he was in the street in a twinkling.

"Did you ever see such a little beast!" exclaimed Mr. Gammon with an air of disgust.

"Beggar on horseback!" exclaimed Snap.

"It won't do, however," said Mr. Quirk, with as chagrined an air as his partners, "for him to go at large in his present frame of mind—he may ruin the thing altogether."

"As good as £500 a-year out of the way of the office," said Snap.

"Egad, that at least," said Mr. Gammon, seizing his hat, "I'll after him, and bring him back at all hazards; and we must really try and do something for him in the meanwhile, to keep him quiet till the thing's brought a little into train." So out went after Titmouse, Mr. Gammon, from whose lips dropped persuasion sweeter than honey; and I should not be surprised if he were to be able to bring back that stubborn piece of conceited stupidity.

As soon as Mr. Titmouse heard the street door sent after him with a kind of bang, he snapped his fingers once or twice, by way of letting off a little of the inflammable air that was in him, and muttered, "Pretty chaps those, upon my word! I'll expose them all! I'll apply to the Lord Mayor—they're a pack of swindlers they are! This is the way they treat *me*, who've got a title to £10,000 a-year! To be sure"—He stood still for a moment, and another moment, and dismay came quickly over him; for it suddenly occurred to him what hold had

he got on Messrs Quirk, Gammon, and Snap?—what could he do?—what HAD he done?

Ah—the golden vision of the last few hours was fading away momentarily, like a dream! Each second of his deep and rapid reflection, rendered more impetuous his desire and determination to return and make his peace with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. By submission for the present he could get the whip-hand of them hereafter! He was in the act of turning round towards the office, when Mr. Gammon softly laid his hand upon the shoulder of his repentant client.

"Mr. Titmouse; my dear sir, what is the matter with you? How could we so misunderstand each other?"

Titmouse's small cunning was on the *qui vive*, and he saw and followed up his advantage. "I am going," said he, in a resolute tone, "to speak to some one else, in the morning."

"That, of course, signifies nothing to any one but yourself. You will take any steps, my dear sir, that occur to you, and act as you may be advised."

"Monstrous kind of you to come and give me such good advice?" exclaimed Titmouse, with a sneer.

"Oh, don't mention it," said Gammon, coolly; "I came out of pure good nature, to assure you that our office, notwithstanding what has passed, entertains not the slightest personal ill-feeling towards you, in thus throwing off their hands a very long, and dreadfully harassing affair."

"Hem!" exclaimed Titmouse, once or twice.

"So good-night, Mr. Titmouse—good-night! God bless you!" Mr. Gammon in the act of returning to his door, extended his hand to Mr. Tittlebat, who he instantly perceived was melting rapidly.

"Why, sir—if I thought you all meant the correct thing—hem! I say, the correct thing by me—I shouldn't so much mind a little disappointment for the time; but you must own, Mr. Gammon, it is very hard being kept out of one's own so long."

"True, very true, Mr. Titmouse. Very hard it is, indeed to bear, and we all felt deeply for you, and would have set every thing in train——"

"*Would have*——"

"Yes, my dear Mr. Titmouse, we *would* have done it, and brought you through every difficulty—over every obstacle."

"Why — you don't — hardly — quite — mean to say you've given it all up?—What, already!" exclaimed Titmouse, in evident alarm.

Gammon had triumphed over Titmouse! whom, nothing loth, he brought back, in two minutes' time, into the room which Titmouse had just before so rudely quitted. Mr. Quirk and Mr. Snap had their parts yet to perform. They were in the act of locking up desks and drawers, evidently on the move; and received Mr. Titmouse with an air of cold surprise.

"Mr. Titmouse again!" exclaimed Mr. Quirk, taking his gloves out of his hat. "Back again!—an unexpected honour." "Leave any thing behind?" inquired Mr. Snap —"don't see any thing."

"Oh no, sir! no sir! This gentleman, Mr. Gammon, and I, have made it all up, gents! I'm not vexed any more not the least."

"*Vexed*, Mr. Titmouse!" echoed Mr. Quirk, with an air sternly ironical. "We are under great obligations to you for your forbearance!"

"Oh, come, gents!" said Titmouse, more and more disturbed, "I *was* too warm, I dare say,—and I ask your pardon, all of you, gents! I won't say another word, if you'll but buckle to business again—quite exactly in your own way—because you, see——"

"It's growing *very* late," said Mr. Quirk, coldly, and looking at his watch; "however, after what you have said, probably at some future time, when we've leisure to look into the thing——"

Poor Titmouse was ready to drop on his knees, in mingled agony and fright.

"May I be allowed to say," interposed the bland voice of Mr. Gammon, addressing himself to Mr. Quirk, "that Mr. Titmouse a few minutes ago assured me, outside there, that if you could only be persuaded to let our house take up his case again——"

"I did—I did indeed, gents! so help me ——!" interrupted Mr. Titmouse, eagerly backing with an oath the ready lie of Mr. Gammon.

Mr. Quirk drew his hand across his chin, musingly, and stood silently for a few moments, evidently irresolute.

"Well," said he at length, but in a very cool way, "since that is so, probably we may be induced to resume our heavy labours in your behalf; and if you will favour us with a call to-morrow night, at the same hour, we may have, by that time, made up our minds as to the course we shall think fit to adopt."

"Lord, sir, I'll be here as the clock strikes, and as meek as a mouse; and pray, have it all in your own way for the future, gents—do!"

"Good night, sir—good-night!" exclaimed the partners, motioning towards the door.

"Good-night, gents!" said Titmouse, bowing very low, and feeling himself at the same time being bowed *out!* As he passed out of the room, he cast a lingering look in their three frigid faces, as if they were angels sternly shutting him out from Paradise. What misery was his, as he walked slowly homeward, with much the same feelings (now that the fumes of the brandy had evaporated, and the reaction of excitement was coming on, aggravated by a recollection of the desperate check he had received) as a sick and troubled man, who, suddenly roused out of a delicious dream, drops into wretched reality, as it were out of a fairy-land, which with all its dear innumerable delights is melting overhead into thin air—disappearing *for ever.*

CHAPTER II.

Closet Court had never looked so odious to Titmouse as it did when, harassed and depressed as I have described him, he approached it about one o'clock, A. M. He flung himself on his bed for a moment directly he had shut his door, intending presently to rise and undress; but sleep having got him prostrate secured her victory. She waved her black wand over him, and he woke not till eight o'clock in the morning. A second long-drawn sigh was preparing to follow its predecessor, when he heard it strike eight, and sprung off the bed in a fright; for he ought to have been at the shop an hour ago. Dashing a little water into his face, and scarce staying to wipe it off, he ran down stairs, through the court, and along the street, never stopping till he had found his way into—almost the very arms of the dreaded Mr. Tagrag; who, rarely making his appearance till about half-past nine, had, as the mischief would have it, happened to come down an hour and a half earlier than usual, on the only morning out of several hundreds on which Titmouse had been more than ten minutes beyond his time.

"Yours very respectfully, Mr. Titmouse — Thomas Tagrag?" exclaimed that personage with mock solemnity, bowing formally to his astounded and breathless shopman.

"I—I—beg your pardon, sir; but I wasn't very well, and overslept myself," stammered Titmouse.

"Ne-ver mind, Mr. Titmouse, ne-ver mind—it don't much signify," interrupted Mr. Tagrag, bitterly; "you've just got an hour and a half to take this piece of silk, with my compliments, to Messrs. Shuttle and Weaver, in Dirt Street, Spitalfields, and ask them if they ar'n't ashamed to send it to a West-End house like mine, and bring back a better piece instead of it!"

"Very well, sir—but—before my breakfast, sir?"

"Did I say a word about breakfast, sir? You heard my orders, sir; you can attend to them or not, Mr. Titmouse, as you please!"

Off trotted Titmouse *instanter*, without his breakfast; and so Tagrag gained one object he had in view. Titmouse found this rather trying: a five-mile walk before him, with no inconsiderable load under his arm, having had nothing to eat since the preceding evening, when he had partaken of a delicate repast of thick slices of bread, smeared slightly over with salt butter, and moistened with a most astringent decoction of tea-leaves, sweetened with brown sugar, and discoloured with sky-blue milk. He had not even a farthing about him wherewith to buy a penny roll! As he went disconsolately along, so many doubts and fears buzzed impetuously about him, that they completely darkened his little soul, and bewildered his small understanding. *Ten thousand a-year!* — it was never meant for the like of him. He soon worked himself into a conviction that the whole thing was infinitely too good to be true; the affair was desperate; it had been all moonshine; for some cunning purpose or another, Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, had been—ah, here he was within a few yards of their residence, the scene of last night's tragic transactions! As he passed Saffron Hill, he paused, looked up towards the blessed abode—

"Where centred all his hopes and fears,"

uttered a profound sigh, and passed slowly on towards Smithfield. The words "*Quirk, Gammon, and Snap,*" seemed to be written over every shop-window which he passed—their images filled his mind's eye. What could they be at? They had been all very polite and friendly—and of their own seeking: had he affronted them? How coldly and proudly they had parted with him over-night! It was evident that they could stand no nonsense—they were great lawyers; so he must (if they really would allow him to see them again) eat humble pie cheerfully till he had got all that they had to give him. How he dreaded the coming night! Perhaps they intended civilly to tell him that they would have nothing more to do with him;—they would get the estate for themselves, or some one else that would be more manageable! They had

taken care to tell him nothing at all about the nature of his pretensions to this grand fortune. Oh, how crafty they were—they had it all their own way!—But what, after all, had he really done? The estates were his, if they were really in earnest—his, and no one's else; and why should he be kept out of them at their will and pleasure? Suppose he were to say he would give them all he was entitled to for £20,000 down, in cash? Oh no; on second thoughts, that would be only two years' income! But on the other hand—he dared hardly even to propose it to his thoughts—still, suppose it *should* really turn out true! Goodness gracious!—that day two months he might be riding about in his carriage in the Parks, and poor devils looking on at him, as he now looked on all those who now rode. There he would be, holding up his head with the best of them, instead of slaving about as he was that moment, carrying about that cursed bundle—ough! how he shrunk as he changed its position, to relieve his aching right arm! Why was his mouth to be stopped—why might he not tell his shopmates? What would he not give for the luxury of telling it to the odious Tagrag? If he *were* to do so, Mr. Tagrag, he was sure, would ask him to dinner the very next Sunday, at his country house at Clapham. Thoughts such as these so occupied his mind, that he did not for a long while observe that he was walking at a rapid rate towards the Mile-end road, having left Whitechapel church nearly half a mile behind him! The possible master of £10,000 a-year felt fit to drop with fatigue, and sudden apprehension of the storm he should have to encounter when he first saw Mr. Tagrag after so long an absence. He was detained for a cruel length of time at Messrs. Shuttle and Weaver's, who not having the required quantity of silk at that moment on their premises, had some difficulty in obtaining it, after having sent for it to one or two neighbouring manufactories; by which means it came to pass that it was two o'clock before Titmouse, completely exhausted and dispirited, and reeking with perspiration, had reached Dowlas and Company's. The gentlemen of the shop had finished their dinners.

"Go up stairs and get your dinner, sir!" exclaimed

Tagrag impetuously, after having received Messrs. Shuttle and Weaver's message.

Titmouse went up stairs hungry enough, and found himself the sole occupant of the long close-smelling room in which his companions had been dining. His dinner was presently brought to him by a slatternly servant-girl. It was in an uncovered basin, which appeared to contain nothing but the leavings of his companions—a savoury intermixture of cold potatoes, broken meat, (chiefly bits of fat and gristle,) a little hot water having been thrown over it to make it appear warm and fresh—(faugh!) His plate (with a small pinch of salt upon it) had not been cleaned after its recent use, but evidently only hastily smeared over with a greasy towel, as also seemed his knife and fork, which, in their disgusting state, he was fain to put up with, the table cloth on which he might have wiped them having been removed. A hunch of bread that seemed to have been tossing about in the pan for days, and half-a-pint of flat-looking and sour-smelling table-beer, completed the fare set before him; opposite which he sate for some minutes, too much occupied with his reflections to commence his repast. He was in the act of scooping out of the basin some of its inviting contents, when—"Titmouse!" exclaimed the voice of one of his shopmates, peering in at him through the half-open door, "Mr. Tagrag wants you! He says you've had plenty of time to finish your dinner!"

"Oh, tell him, then, I'm only just beginning my dinner—eugh! such as it is," replied Titmouse, masticating the first mouthful with an appearance of no *particular* relish, —for to the like of it he had never before sate down since he had been in the honoured house he was then serving.

In a few minutes' time Mr. Tagrag himself entered the room, stuttering—"How much longer, sir, is it your pleasure to spend over your dinner, eh?"

"Not another moment, sir," answered Titmouse, looking with ill-concealed disgust at the savoury victuals before him; "if you'll only allow me a few minutes to go home and buy a penny roll instead of all this"——

"Ve—ry good, sir! Ve—ry parti—cu—larly good, Mr. Titmouse," replied Tagrag, with ill-subdued fury;

"any thing else that I can make a *leetle* memorandum of against the day of your leaving us?"

This hint of two-fold terror, i. e. of withholding the wretched balance of salary that might be due to him, on the ground of misconduct, and of also giving him a damning character, dispelled the small remains of Titmouse's appetite, and he rose to return to the shop, involuntarily clutching his fist as he brushed close past the tyrant Tagrag on the stairs, whom he would have been delighted to pitch down head-foremost; and if he had done so, none of his fellow-slaves below, in spite of their present sycophancy towards Tagrag, would have shown any particular alacrity in picking up their common oppressor. Poor Tittlebat resumed his old situation behind the counter; but how different his present from his former air and manner! With his pen occasionally peeping pertly out of his busy hair over his right ear, and his yard measure in his hand, no one, till Monday morning, had been more cheerful, smirking, and nimble, than Tittlebat Titmouse: Alas, how crestfallen now! None of his companions could make him out, or guess what was in the wind; so they very justly concluded that he had been doing something dreadfully disgraceful, the extent of which was known to Tagrag and himself alone. Their jeers and banters were giving place to cold distrustful looks, that were much more trying to bear. How he longed to be able to burst upon their astounded minds with the pent-up intelligence that was silently racking and splitting his little bosom! But if he did—the terrible firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—oh! the very thought of them glued his lips together. But then there was *one* whom he might surely make a confidant—the excellent Huckaback, with whom he had had no opportunity of communicating since Sunday night. That gentleman was as close a prisoner at the establishment of Diaper and Sarsenet, in Tottenham-court Road, as Titmouse at Messrs. Dowlas's, of which said establishment he was as great an ornament as Titmouse of that of Messrs. Dowlas. They were about the same height, and equals in puppyism of manners, dress, and appearance; but Titmouse was much the better looking. With equal conceit in their faces, that of Huckaback, square, and flat, and sallow, had an expres-

sion of ineffable impudence that made a lady shudder, and a gentleman feel a tingling sensation in his right toe. About his small black eyes there was a glimmer of low cunning;—but I have not patience to paint the fellow any further. When Titmouse left the shop that night, a little after nine, he hurried to his lodgings, to make himself as imposing in his appearance before Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, as his time and means would admit of. Behold, on the table lay a letter from Huckaback. It was written in a flourishing mercantile hand; and here is a copy of it:

"Dear Tit,

"I hope you are well, which is what I can only middling say in respect of me. Such a row with my governors as I have had to-day! I thought that, as I had been in the House near upon eighteen months at L. 25 per annum, I might naturally ask for L. 30 a-year (which is what my Predecessor had,) when, would you believe it, Mr. Sharpeye (who is going to be taken in as a Partner,) to whom I named the thing, ris up in rage against me, and I were had up into the counting-house, where both the governors was, and they gave it me in such a way that you never saw nor heard of; but it wasn't all on their own side, as you know me too well to think of. You would have thought I had been a going to rob the house. They said I was most audacious, and all that, and ungrateful, and what would I have next? Mr. Diaper said times was come to such a pitch!! since he was first in the business, for salaries is risen to double, and not half the work done that was, and no gratitude—(cursed old curmudgeon!) He said if I left them just now, I might whistle for a character, except what I would not like; but if he don't mind I'll give him a trick of law about that—which brings me to what happened to-day with our lawyers, the people at Saffron Hill, whom I thought I would call in on to-day, being near the neighbourhood with some light goods, to see how affairs was getting on, and stir them up a bit"—[this almost took Titmouse's breath away] —"feeling most *interested* on your account, as you know, dear Tit, I do. I said I wanted to speak to one of the

gentlemen on business of importance; whereat I was quickly shown into a room where two gents was sitting. Having put down my parcel for a minute on the table, I said I was a very intimate friend of yours, and had called in to see how things went on about the advertisement; whereat you never saw in your life how struck they looked, and stared at one another in speechless silence, till they said to me, what concerned me about the business? or something of that nature, but in such a way that ris a rage in me directly, all for your sake (for I did not like the looks of things); and says I, I said, we would let them know we were not to be *gammoned;* whereat up rose the youngest of the two, and ringing the bell, he says to a tight-laced young gentleman with a pen behind his ear, 'Show him to the door,' which I was at once; but, in doing so, let out a little of my mind to them. They're no better than they should be, you see if they are; but when we Trick the property, we'll show them who is their masters, which consoles me. Good-bye, keep your spirits up, and I will call and tell you more about it on Sunday. So farewell (I write this at Mr. Sharpeye's desk, who is coming down from dinner directly). Your true friend,

"R. Huckaback.

"P. S.—Met a young Jew last night with a lot of prime cigars, and (knowing he *must* have stole them, they looked so good at the price) I bought one shilling's worth for me, and two shillings worth for you, your salary being higher, and to say nothing of your chances."

All that part of the foregoing letter which related to its amiable writer's interview with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, Titmouse read in a kind of spasm—he could not draw a breath, and felt a choking sensation coming over him. After a while, "I may spare myself," thought he, "the trouble of rigging out—Huckaback has done my business for me with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—mine will only be a walk in vain!" After what had occurred last night between him and them!!—and so urgently as he had been enjoined to keep the matter to himself! Of course Huckaback would seem to have been sent by him; seeing he appeared to have assumed the hectoring tone which Titmouse had tried so vainly over-

night, and now so bitterly repented of, and he had no doubt grossly insulted the arbiters of Titmouse's destiny, (for he knew Huckaback's impudence,)—he had even said that he (Titmouse) would not be GAMMONED by them. But time was pressing: with a beating heart he scrambled into a change of clothes—bottling up his wrath against the unconscious Huckaback till he should see that worthy. In a miserable state of mind he set off soon after for Saffron Hill at a quick pace, which soon became a trot, and often sharpened into a downright run. He saw, heard, and thought of nothing, as he hurried along Oxford Street and Holborn, but Quirk, Gammon, Snap, and Huckaback, and the reception which the latter had secured for him—if, indeed, he was to be received at all. The magical words, *Ten Thousand a-Year*, had not disappeared from the field of his troubled vision; but how faintly and dimly they shone!—like the Pleiades coldly glistening through intervening mists far off—oh! at what a stupendous, immeasurable, and hopeless distance! Imagine those stars gazed at by the anguished and despairing eyes of the bereaved lover, madly believing one of them to contain HER who has just departed from his arms, and from this world, and you may form a notion of the agonizing feelings—the absorbed contemplation of one dear, dazzling, but distant object, experienced on this occasion by Mr. Titmouse. No, no; I don't mean seriously to pretend that so grand a thought as this *could* be entertained by his little optics intellectual; you might as well suppose the tiny eye of a black beetle to be scanning the vague, fanciful, and mysterious figure and proportions of Orion, or a chimpanzee to be perusing and pondering over the immortal *Principia*. I repeat, that I have no desire of the sort, and am determined not again foolishly to attempt fine writing, which I now perceive to be entirely out of my line. In language more befitting me and my subject, I may be allowed to say that there is no getting a quart into a pint pot; that Titmouse's mind was a half-pint—and it was brimful. All the while that I have been going on thus, however, Titmouse was hurrying down Holborn at a rattling rate. When at length he had reached Saffron Hill, he was in a bath of perspiration. His face was quite red; he breathed hard; his heart beat violently; he had got a stitch in his

side; and he could not get his gloves on his hot and swollen hands. He stood for a moment with his hat off, wiping his reeking forehead, and endeavouring to recover himself a little, before entering the dreaded presence to which he had been hastening. He even fancied for a moment, that his eyes gave out sparks of light! While thus pausing, St. Andrew's Church struck ten, half electrifying Titmouse, who bolted up the hill, and was soon standing opposite the door. How the sight of it smote him, as it reminded him of the way in which, on the preceding night, he had bounded out of it! But that could not now be helped; so ring went the bell, as softly, however, as he could; for he recollected that it was a very loud bell, and he did not wish to offend. He waited some time, and nobody answered. He waited for nearly two minutes, and trembled, assailed by a thousand vague fears. He might not, however, have rung loud enough—so—again, a little louder, did he venture to ring. Again he waited. There seemed something threatening in the great brass plate on the door, out of which "Quirk, Gammon, and Snap," appeared to look at him ominously. While he thought of it, by the way, there was something very serious and stern in all their faces—he wondered that he had not noticed it before. What a drunken beast he had been to go on in their presence as he had!—thought he; then Huckaback's image flitted across his disturbed fancy. "Ah!" thought he, "that's the thing! That's it, depend upon it; this door will never be opened to *me* again—he's done for me!" He breathed faster, clenched his fist, and involuntarily raised it in a menacing way, when he heard himself addressed—"Oh! dear me, sir, I *hope* I haven't kept you waiting," said the old woman whom he had before seen, fumbling in her pocket for the door-key. She had been evidently out shopping, having a plate in her left-hand, over which her apron was thrown. "Hope you've not been ringing long, sir?"

"Oh, dear! no, ma'am," replied Titmouse with anxious civility, and a truly miserable smile—"Afraid I may have kept *them* waiting," he added, almost dreading to hear the answer.

"Oh no, sir, not at all—they've all been gone since a little after nine; but there's a letter I was to give you!"

She opened the door; Titmouse nearly dropping. "I'll get it for you, sir—let me see; where did I put it!—Oh, in the clerk's room, I think." Titmouse followed her in. "Dear me—where can it be?" she continued, peering about, and then snuffing the long wick of the candle which she had left burning for the last quarter of an hour, during her absence. "I *hope* none of the clerks has put it away in mistake! Well, it isn't here, any how."

"Perhaps, ma'am, it's in their *own* room"—suggested Titmouse, in a faint tone.

"Oh, p'rhaps it is!" she replied. "We'll go and see"—and she led the way, followed closely by Titmouse, who caught his breath as he passed the green-baize door. Yes, there was the room—the scene of last night was transacted there, and came crowding over his recollection;—there was the green-shaded candlestick—the table covered with papers—an arm-chair near it, in which, probably, Mr. Quirk had been sitting only an hour before, to write the letter they were now in quest of, and which might be to forbid him their presence for ever! How dreary and deserted the room looked, thought he, as he peered about it in search of the dreaded letter!

"Oh, here it is?—well, I never!—who could have put it here, now? I'm sure I didn't. Let me see—it was, no doubt," said the old woman, holding the letter in one hand, and putting the other to her head——

"Never mind, ma'am," said Titmouse, stretching his hand towards her,—"now we've got it, it don't much signify." She gave it to him. "Seem particularly anxious for me to get it—did they?" he inquired, with a strong effort to appear unconcerned—the dreaded letter quite quivering in his fingers.

"No, sir—Mr. Quirk only said I was to give it you when you called. B'lieve they sent it to you, but the clerk said he couldn't find your place out; by the way, (excuse me, sir,) but your's *is* a funny name! How I heard 'em laughing at it, to be sure! What makes people give such queer names? Would you like to read it here, sir?—you're welcome."

"No, thank you, madam—it's not of the *least* consequence," he replied, with a desperate air; and tossing it with attempted carelessness into his hat, which he put on

his head, he very civilly wished her good-night, and departed—very nearly inclined to sickness or faintness, or something of the sort, which the fresh air might perhaps dispel. He quickly espied a lamp at a corner, which promised to afford him an uninterrupted opportunity of inspecting his letter. He took it out of his hat. It was addressed—simply, "Mr. Titmouse, *Cocking* Court, Oxford Street," (which accounted, perhaps, for the clerk's having been unable to find it;) and having been opened with trembling eagerness, thus it read:—

"Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap present their compliments to Mr. Titmouse, and are anxious to save him the trouble of his intended visit this evening.

"They exceedingly regret that obstacles (which it is to be hoped, however, may not prove *ultimately* insurmountable) exist in their way of prosecuting their intended inquiries on behalf of Mr. Titmouse.

"Since their last night's interview with him, circumstances which they could not have foreseen, and over which they have no control, have occurred, which render it unnecessary for Mr. T. to give himself any more anxiety in the affair—at least, not until he shall have heard from Messrs. Q. G. and S.

"If any thing of importance *should* hereafter transpire, it is not improbable that Mr. T. may hear from them.

"They were favoured, this afternoon, with a visit from Mr. T.'s friend—Mr. Hucklebottom.

"Saffron Hill, *Wednesday Even'g*, 12*th July*, 183–."

When poor Titmouse had finished reading over this vague, frigid, and disheartening note a second time, a convulsive sob or two pierced his bosom, indicative of its being indeed swollen with sorrow; and at length, overcome by his feelings, he cried bitterly—not checked even by the occasional exclamations of one or two passers-by. He could not at all control himself. He felt as if he could have almost relieved himself by banging his head against the wall! A tumultuous feeling of mingled grief and despair prevented his thoughts, for a long while, from settling on any one idea or object. At length, when the violence of the storm had somewhat abated, on concluding

a third perusal of the death-warrant to all his hopes, which he held in his hand, his eye lit upon the strange word which was intended to describe his friend Huckaback; and it instantly changed both the kind of his feelings, and the direction in which they had been rushing. Grief became rage; and the stream foamed in quite a new direction—namely, towards Huckaback. That fellow he considered to be the sole cause of the direful disaster which had befallen him. He utterly lost sight of one circumstance, that one should have thought might have occurred to his thoughts at such a time—viz. his own offensive and insolent behaviour over-night, to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap. But so it was:—yes, upon the devoted (but unconscious) head of Huckaback, was to descend the lightning rage of Tittlebat Titmouse. The fire that was thus quickly kindled within, soon dried up the source of his tears. He crammed the letter into his pocket, and started off at once in the direction of Leicester Square, breathing rage at every step—*viresque acquirens eundo.* His hands kept convulsively clenching together as he pelted along. Hotter and hotter became his rage as he neared the residence of Huckaback. When he had reached it, he sprung up stairs; knocked at his *quondam* friend's door; and on the instant of its being—doubtless somewhat surprisedly—opened by Huckaback, who was undressing, Titmouse sprung towards him, let fly a goodly number of violent blows upon his face and breast—and down fell Huckaback upon the bed behind him, insensible, and bleeding profusely from his nose.

"There! there"—gasped Titmouse, breathless and exhausted, discharging a volley of oaths and opprobrious epithets at the victim of his fury. "Do it again! You will, won't you! *You'll* go—and meddle again in other people's—you—cu-cu-cursed officious"—— But his rage was spent—the paroxysm was over; the silent and bleeding figure of Huckaback was before his eyes; and he gazed at him terror-stricken. What had he done! He sunk down on the bed beside Huckaback—then started up, wringing his hands, and staring at him in an ecstacy of remorse and fright. It was rather singular that the noise of such an assault should have roused no one to inquire into it; but so it was. Frightened almost out of

his bewildered senses, he closed and bolted the door; and addressed himself, as well as he was able, to the recovery of Huckaback. Propping him up, and splashing cold water in his face, Titmouse at length discovered symptoms of revival, which he anxiously endeavoured to accelerate, by putting to the lips of the slowly-awakening victim of his violence, some cold water in a tea-cup. He swallowed a little; and soon afterwards, opening his eyes, stared on Titmouse with a dull eye and bewildered air.

"What's been the matter?" at length he faintly inquired.

"Oh, Hucky! so glad to hear you speak again. It's I—I—Titty! I did it! Strike me, Hucky, as soon as you're well enough? Do—kick me—any thing you choose? I won't hinder you," cried Titmouse, sinking on his knees, and clasping his hands together, as he perceived Huckaback rapidly reviving.

"Why—what *is* the matter?" repeated that gentleman, with a wondering air, raising his hand to his nose, from which the blood was still trickling. The fact is, that he had lost his senses, not so much from the violence of the injuries he had received, as from the suddenness with which they had been inflicted.

"I did it all—yes, I did!" continued Titmouse, gazing on him with a look of agony and remorse.

"Why—I can't be awake—I can't!" said Huckaback, rubbing his eyes, and then staring at his stained shirt-front and hands.

"Oh, yes, you are—you are! groaned Titmouse; "and I'm going *mad* as fast as I can! Do what you like to me! Lick me if you please! Call in a constable! Send me to jail! Say I came to rob you—any thing—I don't care what becomes of me!"

"Why—what *does* all this jabber mean, Titmouse?" inquired Huckaback sternly, apparently meditating reprisals.

"Oh, yes, I see! Now you *are* going to give it me! I won't stir. So hit away, Hucky."

"Why—are you mad?" inquired Huckaback, grasping him by the collar rather roughly.

"Yes, quite! Mad!—ruined!—gone to the devil all at once!"

"And what if you are? What did it matter to *me?* What brought you to me, here?" continued Huckaback, in a tone of increasing vehemence. What have I done to offend you? How *dare* you come *here?* And at this time of night, too? Eh?"

"What, indeed! Oh lud, oh lud, oh lud! Kick me, I say—strike me! You'll do me good, and bring me to my senses. *Me* to do all this to you! And we've been such precious good friends always. I'm a brute, Hucky, —I've been mad, stark mad, Hucky—and that's all I can say."

Huckaback stared at him more and more; and began at length to suspect how matters stood—namely, that the Sunday's incident had turned Titmouse's head—he having also, no doubt, heard some desperate bad news during the day, smashing all his hopes. A mixture of emotions kept him silent. Astonishment—apprehension—doubt—pride—pique—resentment. He had been *struck* —his blood had been drawn—by the man there before him on his knees, formerly his friend, now, he supposed, a madman.

"Why, curse me, Titmouse, if I can make up my mind what to do to you!" he exclaimed. "I—I—suppose you're going mad, or gone mad, and I must forgive you. But get away with you—out with you, or—or—I'll call in"——

"Forgive me—forgive me, dear Hucky! Don't send me away—I shall go and drown myself if you do."

"What the d—l do I care if you do? You'd much better have gone and done it before you came here. Nay, be off and do it now, instead of blubbering here in this way."

"Go on! Hit away—it's doing me good—the worse the better!" sobbed Titmouse.

"Come, come—none of this noise here. I'm tired of it."

"But, pray, don't send me away from you. I shall go straight to the devil if you do. I've no friend but you, Hucky. Yet I've been such a villain to you!—But it quite put the devil into me, when all of a sudden I found it was *you.*"

"Me!—Why what are you after?" interrupted Huckaback, with an air of angry wonder.

"Oh dear, dear!" groaned Titmouse; "if I've been a brute to you, which is quite true, you've been the ruin of me clean! I'm clean done for, Huck. Cleaned out! You've done my business for me; knocked it all in the head. I sha'n't never hear any more of it—they've said as much in their letter—they say that you've called"——

Huckaback now began to have a glimmering notion of his having been, in some considerable degree, connected with the mischief of the day—an unconscious agent in it. He audibly drew in his breath, as it were, as he more and more distinctly recollected his visit to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and adverted more particularly to his *threats*, uttered, too, in Titmouse's name, and as if by his authority. Whew! here was a kettle of fish!

Now strange and unaccountable as, at first thought, it may appear, the very circumstance which one would have thought calculated to assuage his resentment against Titmouse—namely, that he had really *injured* Titmouse most seriously, (if not indeed irreparably,) and so *provoked* the drubbing which had just been administered to him—had quite the contrary effect. Paradoxical as it may seem, matter of clear mitigation was at once converted into matter of aggravation. Were the feelings which Huckaback then experienced akin to that which often produces hatred of a person whom one has injured? May it be thus accounted for? That there is a secret satisfaction in the mere consciousness of being a sufferer—a martyr—and that, too, in the presence of a person whom one perceives to be aware that he has wantonly injured; that one's bruised spirit is soothed by the sight of his remorse—by the consciousness that he is punishing himself infinitely more severely than *we* could punish him; and of the claim one has obtained to the *sympathy* of every body who sees, or may hear of one's sufferings, (that rich and grateful balm to injured feeling.) But when, as in the case of Huckaback, feelings of this description (in a coarse and small way, to be sure, according to his kind) were suddenly encountered by a consciousness of his having *deserved* his sufferings; when the martyr felt himself

quickly sinking into the culprit and offender; when, I say, Huckaback felt an involuntary consciousness that the gross indignities which Titmouse had just inflicted on him, had been justified by the provocation—nay, far less, that his mischievous and impudent interference had deserved;—nay, when feelings of this sort, moreover, were sharpened by a certain tingling sense of physical pain from the blows which he had received—the result was, that the sleeping lion of Huckaback's courage was very near awakening.

"*I've half a mind, Titmouse*"—said Huckaback, knitting his brows, and appearing inclined to raise his arm. There was an ominous pause for a moment or two, during which Titmouse's feelings also underwent a slight alteration. His allusion to Huckaback's ruinous insult to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, unconsciously converted his remorse into rage, which it rather perhaps resuscitated. He rose from his knees. "Ah!" said he, in quite an altered tone, "you *may* look fierce! you may! —you'd better strike me, Huckaback, do! Finish the mischief you've begun this day! Hit away—you're quite safe,"—and he secretly prepared himself for the mischief which—did not come.

[I think you will very rarely find an impudent man to be a courageous one;—and Huckaback had certainly considerable pretensions to the *former* character.]

"You *have* ruined me! you have, Huckaback!" continued Titmouse, with increasing vehemence; "and I shall be cutting my throat—nay," striking his fist on the table, "I will."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Huckaback, apprehensively. "No, Titmouse, don't—don't think of it; it will all come right yet, depend on't; you see if it don't!"

"Oh, no! it's all done for—it's all up with me!"

"But what's been done?—let us hear," said Huckaback, as he passed a wet towel to and fro over his ensanguined features. It was by this time clear that the storm which had for some time given out only a few faint fitful flashes or flickerings in the distance had passed away. Titmouse, with many grievous sighs, took out the letter which had produced the paroxysms we have been describing, and read it aloud. "And only see how they've

spelled your name, Huckaback—look!" he added, handing his friend the letter.

"How *particular* vulgar!" exclaimed Huckaback, with a contemptuous air, which, overspreading his features, half closed as was his left eye, and swollen as was his cheek and nose, would have made him a queer object to one who had leisure to observe such matters. "And so this is all they say of *me*," he continued. "How do you come to know that I've been doing you a mischief? All I did was just to look in as respectful as possible, to ask how you was, and they very civilly told me you was very well, and we parted"——

"Nay, and that's a lie, Huckaback, and you know it!" interrupted Titmouse.

"It's true, so help me ——!" vehemently asseverated Huckaback.

"Why, perhaps you'll deny that you wrote and told me all you said," interrupted Titmouse, indignantly, feeling in his pocket for Huckaback's letter, which that worthy had at that moment quite forgotten having sent, and certainly seemed rather nonplussed on being reminded of.

"Oh—ay, if you mean *that*,—hem!"—he stammered.

"Come, you know you're a liar, Huck—but it's no good now; liar or no liar, it's all over."

"The pot and kettle, any how, Tit, as far as that goes—but let's spell over this letter; we haven't studied it yet; I'm a hand rather at getting at what's said in a letter!—Come"—and they drew their chairs together, Huckaback reading over the letter, slowly, alone; Titmouse's eyes travelling incessantly from his friend's countenance to the letter, and so back again, to gather what might be the effect of its perusal.

"There's a glimpse of daylight yet, Titty!" said Huckaback, as he concluded reading it.

"Now! Is there really? Do tell me, Hucky"—

"Why, first and foremost, how uncommon polite they are, (except that they haven't manners enough to spell my name right)"—

"Really—and so they are!" exclaimed Titmouse, rather elatedly.

"And then, you see, there's another thing—if they'd meant to give the thing the go-by altogether, what could

have been easier than to have said so?—but they haven't said any thing of the sort, so they don't mean to give it all up."

"Lord, Huck! what would I give for such a head as yours! What you say is quite true," said Titmouse, still more cheerfully.

"To be sure, they do say there's an *obstacle*—an obstacle, you see—nay, its obstacles, which is several, and that"——Titmouse's face fell.

"But they say again, that it's—it's—curse their big words—they say it's—to be got over in time."

"Well—that's something, isn't it?"

"To be sure it is; and an't any thing better than nothing? But then, again, here's a stone in the other pocket—they say there's a *circumstance!*—don't you hate circumstances, Titty?—I do."

"So do I! What does it mean? I've often heard—isn't it a *thing*. And that may be any thing."

"There's a great dif—hem! And they go on to say it's happened since you was there"——

"Curse me, then, if that don't mean *you*, Huckaback!" interrupted Titmouse, with returning anger.

"No, that can't be it; they said they'd no control over the circumstance;—now they *had* over me; for they ordered me to the door, and I went; an't that so, Titty?—Lord, how my eye does smart, to be sure!"

[This was judiciously thrown in at that moment by Huckaback, as a kind of set-off.]

"And don't I smart all over, inside and out, if it come to that?" inquired Titmouse, dolefully.

"There's nothing particular in the rest of the letter—only uncommon civil, and saying if any thing turns up you shall hear."

"*I* could make that out myself—so there's nothing in that—" said Titmouse, quickly.

"Well—if it *is* all over—what a pity! Such things as we could have done, Titty, if we'd got the thing—eh?"

Titmouse groaned at this glimpse of the heaven he seemed shut out of for ever.

"Can't you find any thing—nothing at all, comfortable-like, in the letter? he inquired, with a deep sigh.

Huckaback again took up the letter and spelt it over.

"Well," said he, striving to give himself an appearance of thinking, "there's something in it, that, after all, I don't seem quite to get at the bottom of—they've seemingly taken a deal of pains with it."

[And undoubtedly it *was* a document that had been pretty well considered by its framers, before being sent out; though, probably, they had hardly anticipated its being so soon afterwards subjected to the scrutiny of the acute intellects which were now engaged upon it.]

"And then, again, you know they're lawyers; and do *they* ever write any thing that hasn't got more in it than any body can find out? These gents that wrote this, they're a trick too keen for the thieves even—and how can *we*—hem!—but I wonder if that fat, old, bald-headed gent, with sharp eyes, was Mr. Quirk"——

"To be sure it was," interrupted Titmouse, with a half shudder.

"Was it? Well, then, I'd advise Old Nick to look sharp before he tackles *that* old gent, that's all!"

"Give me Mr. Gammon for my money—such an *uncommon* gentlemanlike—he's quite taken to me——"

"Ah, that was he with the black velvet waistcoat, and white hands! But *he* can look stern, too, Tit! You should have seen him ring—hem!—But what was I saying about the letter? Don't you see they say they'll be sure to write if any thing turns up?"

"So they do, to be sure! Well—I'd forgot that!" interrupted Titmouse, brightening up.

"Then, isn't there their advertisement in the Flash? They hadn't their eye on any thing when they put it there, I dare say!—They can't get out of that, any how!"

"I begin to feel all of a sweat, Hucky; I'm sure there's something in the wind yet!" said Titmouse, drawing nearer still to his comforter. "And more than that—would they have said half they did to me last night——"

"Eh! hollo, by the way! I've not heard of what went on last night! So you went to 'em? Well—tell us all that happened—and nothing but the truth, be *sure* you don't; come, Titty!" said Huckaback, snuffing the candle, and then turning eagerly to his companion.

"Well—they'd such a number of queer-looking papers before them, some with old German-text writing, and

others with zigzag marks—and they were so uncommon polite—they all three got up as I went in, and made me bows, one after the other, and said, 'Yours most obediently, Mr. Titmouse,' and a great many more such things."

"Well—and then?"

"Why, Hucky, so help me ——! and 'pon my soul, that old gent, Mr. Quirk, told me"—Titmouse's voice trembled at the recollection—"he says, 'Sir, you're the real owner of Ten Thousand a-year—'"

"La!" ejaculated Huckaback, opening wider and wider his eyes and ears as his friend went on.

"'And a title—a *lord*, or something of that sort—and you've a great many country seats; and there's been £10,000 a-year saving up for you ever since you was born—and heaps of interest—'"

"Lord, Tit! you take my breath away," gasped Huckaback, his eyes fixed intently on his friend's face.

"Yes; and they said I might marry the most beautifulest woman that ever my eyes saw, for the asking."

"You'll forget poor Bob Huckaback, Tit!" murmured his friend, despondingly.

"Not I"—

"Have you been to Dowlas's to-day, after hearing all this?"

[The thermometer seemed to have been plunged out of hot water into cold—Titmouse was down at zero in a trice.]

"Oh!—that's it! 'Tis all gone again! What a fool I am! We've clean forgot this cursed letter—and that leads me to the end of what took place last night. That cursed shop was what we split on!"

"Split on the shop! eh? What's the meaning of that?" inquired Huckaback, with eager anxiety.

"Why, that's the thing," continued Titmouse, in a faltering tone, and with a depressed look—"That was what I wanted to know myself; for they said I'd better go back!! So I said, 'Gents,' said I, 'I'll be ——— if I'll go back to the shop any more;' and I snapped my fingers at them—so! (for you know what a chap I am when my blood's up.) And they all turned ghastly pale—they did, upon my life—you never saw any thing like

it? And one of them said then, in an humble way, 'Wouldn't I please to go back to the shop, just for a day or two, till things is got to rights a bit.' 'Not a day nor a minute!' said I, in an immense rage. 'We think you'd better, really,' said they. 'Then,' says I, 'if that's your plan, curse me if I won't cut with you all, and I'll employ some one else!' and—would you believe me! out I went, bang! into the street!!"

"You *did*, Tit!!"

"They shouldn't have given me so much brandy and water as they did; I didn't well know what I was about, what with the news and the spirits!"

"And you went into the street?" inquired Huckaback, with a kind of horror.

"I did, indeed."

"They'd given you the spirits to see what kind of chap you'd be if you got the property—only to try you, depend on it!"

"Lord! I—I dare say they did!" exclaimed Titmouse, elevating his head with sudden amazement; totally forgetting that that same brandy and water he had asked for—"and me never to think of it at the time!"

"Now are you quite sure you wasn't in a *dream* last night, all the while?"

"Oh, dear, I wish I had been—I do indeed, Hucky!"

"Well—you went into the street—what then?" inquired Huckaback, with a sigh of exhausted attention.

"Why, when I'd got there I was fit to bite my tongue off, as one may suppose; but, just as I was a-turning to go in again, who should come up to me but Mr. Gammon, saying, he humbly hoped there was no offence."

"Oh, glorious! So it was all set right again, then—eh?"

"Why—I—I can't quite exactly say that much, either—but—when I went back, (being obligated by Mr. Gammon being so pressing,) the other two was sitting as pale as death; and though Mr. Gammon and me went on our knees to the old gent, it wasn't any use for a long time; and all that he could be got to say was, that perhaps I might look in again to-night—(but they first made me swear a solemn oath on the Bible never to tell any one

any thing about the fortune)—and then—*you* went, Huckaback, and you did the business; they of course concluding I'd sent you!"

"Bother! that can't be. Don't you see how civilly they speak of me in their letter? They're afraid of me, you may depend on it. By the way, Tit, how much did you promise to come down, if you got the thing?"

"*Come down!*—I—really—by Jove, I didn't! No!—I'm sure I didn't!" answered Titmouse, as if new light had burst in upon him.

"Why, Tit, I never seed such a goose! That's it, depend upon it—it's the whole thing. That's what they're driving at, in the note!—Why, Tit, where *was* your wits? D'ye think such gents as them—great lawyers, too—will work for nothing?—You write and tell them you will come down handsome—say a couple of hundreds, besides expenses—Gad! 'twill set you on your pins again, Titty!—Rot me! now I think of it, if I didn't dream last night that you was a Member of Parliament, or something of that sort."

"A Member of Parliament! And so I shall, if all this turns up well."

"You see if my dream don't come true! You see, Titty, I'm *always* a-thinking of you, day and night. Never was two fellows that was such close friends as we was from the beginning."

[They had been acquainted with each other about a year.]

"Hucky, what a cruel scamp I was to behave to you in the manner I did—curse me, if I couldn't cry to see your eye bunged up in that way!"

"Pho! dear Titty, I knew you loved me, all the while—and meant no harm; you wasn't yourself when you did it—and besides, I deserved ten times more.—If you had killed me, I should have liked you as much as ever!"

"Give us your hand, Hucky! Let's forgive one another!" cried Titmouse, excitedly: and their hands were quickly locked together.

"If we don't mismanage the thing, we shall be all right yet, Titty; but you won't do any thing without speaking to me first—will you, Titty?"

"The thoughts of it all going right again is enough to set me wild, Hucky!—But what shall we do to set the thing going again?"

"*Quarter past one!*" quivered the voice of the paralytic watchman beneath, startling the friends out of their exciting colloquy; his warning being at the same time silently seconded by the long-wicked candle, burning within half an inch of its socket. They hastily agreed that Titmouse should immediately write to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, a proper, *i. e.* a most abject letter, solemnly pledging himself to obey their injunctions in every thing for the future, and offering them a handsome reward for their exertions, if successful.

"Well—good-night, Huck! good night," said Titmouse, rising. "I am not the least sleepy—I sha'n't sleep a wink all night long! I shall sit up to write my letter—you haven't got a sheet of paper, here, by the way?—I've used all mine." That was, he had, some months before, bought a sheet to write a letter, and had so used it.

Huckaback produced a sheet, somewhat crumpled, from a drawer. "I'd give a hundred if I had them!" said he; "I sha'n't care a straw for the hiding I've got to-night—though I'm a *leetle* sore after it, too—and what the deuce am I to say to-morrow to Messrs. Diaper—"

"Oh, you can't hardly be at a loss for a lie that'll suit *them*, surely!—So good night, Hucky—good night!"

Huckaback wrung his friend's hand, and was in a moment or two alone. "Haven't my fingers been itching all the while to be at the fellow!" exclaimed he, as he shut the door. "But, somehow, I've got too soft a sperrit, and can't bear to hurt any one;—and then—if the chap gets his £10,000 a-year—why—hem! Titty an't such a bad fellow, in the main, after all."

If Titmouse had been many degrees higher in the grade of society, *he would still have met with his Huckaback;*—a trifle more polished, perhaps, but hardly more quick-sighted or effective than, in his way, had been the vulgar being he had just quitted!

Titmouse hastened homeward. How it was, he knew not; but the feelings of elation with which he had quitted Huckaback did not last long; they rapidly sunk, in the cold night-air, lower and lower, the farther he got from

Leicester Square. He tried to recollect *what it was* that had made him take so very different a view of his affairs from that with which he had entered Huckaback's room. He had still a vague impression that they were not desperate; that Huckaback had told him so, *and somehow proved it*, but how he now knew not—he could not recollect. As Huckaback had gone on, from time to time, Titmouse's little mind seemed to him to comprehend and appreciate what was said, and to gather encouragement from it; but now—consume it!—he stopped—rubbed his forehead —what the deuce *was* it? By the time that he had reached his own door, he felt in as deploring and despairing a humour as ever. He sat down to write his letter at once; but, after many vain efforts to express his meaning—his feelings being not in the least degree relieved by the many oaths he uttered—he at length furiously dashed his pen, point-wise, upon the table, and thereby destroyed the only implement of the sort which he possessed. Then he tore, rather than pulled off, his clothes; blew out his candle with a furious *puff;* and threw himself on the bed—but in so doing banged the back of his head against the back of the bed—and which suffered most, for some time after, probably Mr. Titmouse was best able to tell.

Hath, then—oh, Titmouse! fated to undergo much!—the blind jade, Fortune, in her mad vagaries—she, the goddess whom thou hast so long foolishly worshipped—at length cast her sportful eye upon thee, and singled thee out to become the envy of millions of admiring fools, by reason of the pranks she will presently make thee exhibit for her amusement? If this be indeed, as at present it promises, her intent, she truly, to me calmly watching her movements, appears resolved first to wreak her spite upon thee to the uttermost, and make thee pass through intense sufferings! Oh me! Oh me! Alas!

The accident, for such it was, by which Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap became possessed of the important information which put them into motion, as we have seen, to find out by advertisement one yet unknown to them, it will not be necessary, for some time, for me to explain. Theirs was a keen house, truly; and they would not, one may be sure, have lightly committed themselves to their present extent, namely, in inserting such an advertise-

ment in the newspapers, and above all, going so far in their disclosures to Titmouse. Their prudence in the latter step, however, was very questionable to themselves, even; and they immediately afterwards deplored together the precipitation with which Mr. Quirk had communicated to Titmouse the nature and extent of his possible good fortune. It was Mr. Quirk's own doing, however, and after as much expostulation as the cautious Gammon could venture to use. He, however, had his motive, as well as Mr. Gammon. I say they had not *lightly* taken up the affair; they had not "acted unadvisedly." They were fortified, first, by the opinions of Mr. Mortmain, an able and experienced conveyancer; who thus wound up an abtrusely learned opinion on the voluminous "case" which had been submitted to him:—

"* * Under all these circumstances, I am decidedly of opinion that the well-established rule of law above adverted to, viz., &c., &c., &c., is clearly applicable to the present case; from which it follows, that the title to the estates in question is at this moment not in their present possessor, but in 1789 passed through Dame Dorothy Dreddlington into the female line, and ultimately vested in Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse—who, however, seems not to have been at all aware of the existence of his rights, or he could hardly have been concerned in the pecuniary arrangements sanctioned at fol. 33 of the case. And his heirs—probably something may be heard of them by making careful inquiry in the neighbourhood where he was last heard of, and issuing advertisements for his heir-at-law; care of course being taken not to be so specific in the terms of such advertisements as to attract the notice of A B, (the party, I presume, now in possession.) If such persons should, by the means above suggested, be discovered, I advise proceedings to be commenced forthwith, under the advice of some gentleman of experience at the common law bar.

"Mouldy Mortmain.

"*Linc. Inn, January* 19, 18?–."

This was sufficiently gratifying to the "House;" but, to make assurance doubly sure, before embarking in so harassing and expensive an enterprise, the same *case*, (of

course without Mr. Mortmain's opinion) was laid before a younger conveyancer; who, having much less business than Mr. Mortmain, would, it was thought, "look into the case fully," though receiving only one-third of the fee which had been paid to Mr. Mortmain. And Mr. Fussy Frankpledge—that was his name—*did* "look into the case fully," and in doing so, turned over two-thirds of his little library, and by note, and verbally, gleaned the opinions upon the subject of some dozen or so of his "learned friends;" to say nothing of the magnificent air with which he indoctrinated his eager and confiding pupils upon the subject. At length his imp of a clerk bore the precious result of his master's labours to Saffron Hill, in the shape of an "opinion," three times as long as, and indescribably more difficult to understand than, the opinion of Mr. Mortmain, and which, if it demonstrated any thing beyond the prodigious *cram* which had been undergone by its writer for the purpose of producing it, demonstrated this—namely, that neither the party indicated by Mr. Mortmain, nor the one then actually in possession, had any more right to the estate than the aforesaid Mr. Frankpledge; but that the happy individual so entitled was some third person. Messrs. Quirk and Gammon hummed and hawed a good deal on perusing these contradictory opinions of counsel learned in the law; and the proper result followed—*i. e.* a "CONSULTATION," which was to solder up all the differences between Mr. Mortmain and Mr. Frankpledge, or at all events strike out some light which might guide their clients on their adventurous way.

Now Mr. Mortmain had been Mr. Quirk's conveyancer for about three years; and Quirk was ready to suffer death in defence of any opinion of Mr. Mortmain. Mr. Gammon swore by Frankpledge, who was his brother-in-law, and of course a "rising man." Mortmain belonged to the old school—Frankpledge steered by the new lights. The former could point to hundreds of cases in the Law Reports which had been ruled according to his opinion, and some fifty that had been overruled thereby; the latter, although he had been only five years in practice, had written an opinion which led to a suit which had ended in a difference of opinion between the Court of King's bench and the Common Pleas, the credit of having done which

was really not a bit tarnished by the decision of a Court of Error, without hearing the other side, *against* the opinion of Mr. Frankpledge. But——

Mr. Frankpledge quoted *so* many cases, and went to the bottom of every thing—and was *so* civil.

Well, the consultation came off, at length, at Mr. Mortmain's chambers, at eight o'clock in the evening. A few minutes before that hour, Messrs. Quirk and Gammon were to be seen in the clerk's room, in civil conversation with that prim functionary, who explained to them that *he* did all Mr. Mortmain's drafting, pupils were *so* idle; that Mr. Mortmain did not score out much of what he (the aforesaid clerk) had drawn; that he noted up Mr. Mortmain's new cases for him in the reports, Mr. M. having so little time; and that the other day the Vice Chancellor called on Mr. Mortmain, with several other matters of that sort, calculated to enhance the importance of Mr. Mortmain, who, as the clerk was asking Mr. Gammon, in a good-natured way, how long Mr. Frankpledge had been in practice, and where his chambers were, made his appearance, with a cheerful look and a bustling gait, having just walked down from his house in Queen's Square, (somewhere in the wilds of Bedford Square, as Mrs. Gore delights to call them, in her West-End pleasantry,) with a comfortable bottle of old port on board. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Frankpledge arrived, followed by his little clerk, bending beneath two bags of books, (unconscious bearer of as much law as had well nigh split thousands of learned heads, broken tens of thousands of hearts, in the making of, being destined to have a similar but far greater effect in the applying of,) and the consultation began.

As Frankpledge entered, he could not help casting a sheep's eye towards a table that glistened with *such* an array of "papers," (a tasteful arrangement of Mr. Mortmain's clerk before every consultation,) and down sate the two conveyancers and the two attorneys. I devoutly wish I had time to describe the scene at length; but greater events are pressing upon me. The two conveyancers fenced with one another for some time very guardedly and good-humouredly; pleasant was it to observe the conscious condescension of Mortmain, the anxious energy and volubility of Frankpledge. When Mr. Mortmain

said any thing that seemed weighty or pointed, Quirk looked with an elated air, a quick triumphant glance, at Gammon; who, in his turn, whenever Mr. Frankpledge quoted an "old case" from Bendloe, Godsbolt, or the Year Books, (which, having always piqued himself in his almost exclusive acquaintance with the modern cases, he made a point of doing,) gazed at Quirk with a smile of placid superiority. Mr. Frankpledge talked almost the whole time: Mr. Mortmain, immovable in the view of the case he had taken in his "opinion," listened with an attentive, good-natured air, ruminating pleasantly the while upon the quality of the port he had been drinking, (the first of the bin which he had tasted,) and the decision which the Chancellor might come to on a case brought into court, on his advice, and which had been argued that afternoon. At last Frankpledge unwittingly fell foul of a favourite crotchet of Mortmain's—and at it they went, hammer and tongs, for nearly twenty minutes, (it had nothing whatever to do with the case they were commenting upon.) In the end, Mortmain of course adhered to his points, and Frankpledge entrenched himself in his books; each slightly yielded to the views of the other on immaterial points, (or what could have appeared the use of the consultation?) but did that which both had resolved upon doing from the first, *i. e.* sticking to his original opinion. Both had talked an amazingly deal of deep law, which had at least one effect, viz., it fairly drowned both Quirk and Gammon, who, as they went home, with not (it must be owned) the clearest perceptions in the world of what had been going on, (though, before going to the consultation, each had really known a good deal about the case,) stood each stoutly by his conveyancer's opinion, each protesting that he had never been once misled—Quirk by Mortmain, or Gammon by Frankpledge—and each resolved to give his man more of the business of the House than he had before. I grieve to add that they parted that night with a trifle less of cordiality than had been their wont. In the morning, however, this little irritation and competition had passed away; and they agreed, before giving up the case, to take the final opinion of Mr. Tresayle—the great Mr. Tresayle. He was, indeed, a wonderful conveyancer—a perfect miracle of real-property law-learning. He had such an

enormous practice for forty-five years, that for the last ten he had never put his nose out of chambers for pure want of time, and at last of inclination; and had been so conversant with Norman French and law Latin, in the old English letter, that he had almost entirely forgotten how to write the modern English character. His opinions made their appearance in three different kinds of handwriting. First, one that none but he and his old clerk could make out; secondly, one that none but he himself could read; and thirdly, one that neither he, nor his clerk, nor any one on earth could decipher. The use of any one of these styles depended on—the difficulty of the case to be answered. If it were an easy one, the answer was very judiciously put into No. I; if rather difficult, it, of course, went into No. II; and if exceedingly difficult, (and also important,) it was very properly thrown into No. III; being a question that really ought not to have been asked, and did not deserve an answer. The fruit within these uncouth shells, however, was precious, Mr. Tresayle's law was supreme over every body's else. It was currently reported that Lord Eldon even (who was himself slightly acquainted with such subjects) reverently deferred to the authority of Mr. Tresayle; and would lie winking and knitting his shaggy eyebrows half the night, if he thought that Mr. Tresayle's opinion on a case and his own differed. This was the great authority, to whom, as in the last resort, Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, resolved to appeal. To his chambers they, within a day or two after their consultation at Mr. Mortmain's, despatched their case, with a highly respectable fee, and a special compliment to his clerk, hoping to hear from that awful quarter within two months—which was the earliest average period within which Mr. Tresayle's opinions found their way to his patient but anxious clients. It came, at length, with a note from Mr. Faithful, his clerk, intimating that they would find him at chambers the next morning, prepared to explain the opinion to them; having just had it read over to him by Mr. Tresayle, for it proved to be in No. II. The opinion occupied about two pages; and the handwriting bore a strong resemblance to Chinese, or Arabic, with a quaint intermixture of the Uncial Greek character —it was impossible to contemplate it without a certain

feeling of awe! In vain did old Quirk squint at it, from all quarters, for nearly a couple of hours (having first called in the assistance of a friend of his, an old attorney of fifty years' standing); nay—even Mr. Gammon, foiled at length, could not for the life of him refrain from a soft curse or two. Neither of them could make any thing of it—(as for Snap, they never showed it to to him; it was not within his province—*i. e.* the Insolvent Debtor's Court, the Old Bailey, the Clerkenwell Sessions, the inferior business of the Common Law Courts, and the worrying of the clerks of the office—a department in which he was perfection itself.)

To their great delight, Mr. Tresayle's opinion completely corroborated Mr. Mortmain's, (neither whose nor Mr. Frankpledge's had been laid before him.) Nothing could be more terse, perspicuous, and conclusive than the great man's opinion. Mr. Quirk was in raptures, and immediately set out for an engraving of Mr. Tresayle, which had lately come out, for which he paid 5s., and ordered it to be framed and hung up in his own room, where already grinned a quaint resemblance in black profile, of Mr. Mortmain. In special good-humuor he assured Mr. Gammon, (who was plainly somewhat crestfallen about Mr. Frankpledge,) that every body must have a beginning; and he (Quirk) had been once only a beginner.

Once fairly on the scent, Messrs. Quirk and Gammon soon began secretly but energetically, to push their inquiries in all directions. They discovered that Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse, having spent the chief portion of his blissful days as a cobbler at Whitehaven, had died in London, somewhere about the year 1792 or 1793. At this point they stood for a long while, in spite of two advertisements, to which they had been driven with the greatest reluctance, for fear of attracting the attention of those most interested in thwarting them. Even that part of the affair had been managed somewhat skilfully. It was a stroke of Gammon's to advertise not for "Heir at Law," but "*Next of Kin*," as the reader has seen. The former might have challenged a notice of unfriendly curiosity, which the latter was hardly calculated to attract. At length—at the "third time of asking"—up turned Tittlebat Titmouse, in the way which we have seen. His rela-

tionship with Mr. Gabriel Tittlebat Titmouse was indisputable; in fact he was that "deceased person's" heir-at-law. The reader may guess the chagrin of Mr. Gammon at the appearance, manner, and character of the person whom he fully believed, on first seeing him at Messrs. Dowlas's, to be the rightful owner of the fine estates held by one who, as against Mr. Titmouse, had no more real title to them than had Mr. Tagrag; and for whom their house was to undertake the very grave responsibility of instituting such proceedings as would be requisite to place Mr. Titmouse in the position which they believed him entitled to occupy—having to encounter a hot and desperate opposition at every point, from those who had nine-tenths of the law—to wit, *possession*—on their side, on which they stood as upon a rock; and with immense means for carrying on the war defensive.

That Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, did not contemplate undertaking all this, without having calculated upon its proving well worthy their while, was only reasonable. They were going voluntarily to become the means of conferring immense benefits upon one who was a total stranger to them—who had not a penny to expend upon the prosecution of his own rights. Setting aside certain difficulties which collected themselves into two awkward words, MAINTENANCE and CHAMPERTY, and stared them in the face whenever they contemplated any obvious method of securing the just reward of their enterprise and toils—setting aside all this, I say, it might turn out, only after a ruinous expenditure, that the high authorities which had sanctioned their proceedings, in point of law, had expressed their favourable opinions on a state of facts, which, however plain and compact they looked on paper, could not be properly substantiated, if keenly sifted, and determinedly resisted. All this, too—all their time, labour, and money, to go for nothing—on behalf of a vulgar, selfish, ignorant, presumptuous, ungrateful puppy, like Titmouse. Well indeed, therefore, might Mr. Gammon, as we have seen he did, give himself and partners a forty-eight hours' interval between his interview with Titmouse and formal introduction to the firm, in which to consider their position and mode of procedure. The taste of his quality which that first interview afforded them all

—so far surpassing all that the bitter description of him given to them by Mr. Gammon had prepared them for—filled them with inexpressible disgust, and would have induced them to throw up the whole affair—so getting rid both of it and him together. But then, on the other hand, there were certain very great advantages, both of a professional and even directly pecuniary kind, which it would have been madness, indeed, for any office lightly to throw away. It was really, after all, an unequal struggle between feeling and interest. If they should succeed in unseating the present wrongful possessor of a very splendid property, and putting in his place the rightful owner, by means alone of their own professional ability, perseverance, and heavy pecuniary outlay, (a fearful consideration, truly!) what recompense could be too great for such resplendent services? To say nothing of the *eclat* which it would gain for their office, in the profession and in the world at large, and the substantial and permanent advantages, if, as they ought to be, they were entrusted with the general management of the property by the new and inexperienced, and confiding owner—ay, but there was the rub! What a disheartening and disgusting specimen of such new owner had disclosed itself to their anxiously expecting but soon recoiling eyes—always, however, making due allowances for one or two cheering indications, on Mr. Titmouse's part, of a certain rapacious and litigious humour, which might pleasantly and profitably occupy their energies for some time to come! Their position and interests had long made them sharp observers; but when did low and disgusting qualities ever before force themselves into such revolting prominence, as his had done, in the very moment of an expected display of the better feelings of human nature—such as enthusiastic gratitude? They had in their time to deal with some pleasant specimens of humanity, to be sure—but where any more odious and impracticable than Tittlebat Titmouse threatened to prove himself? What hold could they get upon such a character as his? Beneath all his coarseness and weakness, there was a glimmer of low cunning, which might, *cæteris paribus*, keep their superior and practised astuteness in full play. These were difficulties, cheerless enough in the contemplation, truly;

but, nevertheless, the partners could not bear the idea of escaping from them by throwing up the affair altogether. Then came the question—How were they to manage Titmouse?—how acquire an early and firm hold of him, so as to convert him into a *capital client*? His fears and his interests were obviously the engines with which their experienced hands were to work; and several long and most anxious consultations had Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, had on this important matter. The first great question with them was—To what extent, and when they should acquaint him with the nature of his expectations?

Gammon was for keeping him comparatively in the dark, till success was within reach; during that interval, (which might be a long one,) by alternately stimulating his hopes and fears; by habituating him to an entire dependence on them; by persuading him of the extent of their exertions and sacrifices on his behalf—they *might* do something; mould him a little into shape fit for their purposes; and persuade him that his affairs must needs go to ruin, but in their hands. Something like this was the scheme of the cautious, acute, and placid Gammon. Mr. Quirk thought thus:—tell the fellow at once the whole extent of what we can do for him, viz., turn a half-starving linen-draper's shopman into the owner of £10,000 a-year, and a great store of ready money. This will, in a manner, stun him into submission, and make him at once and for all what we want him to be. He will immediately fall prostrate with reverent gratitude—looking at us, moreover, as three gods, who at our will, can shut him out of heaven. *That's* the way, said Mr. Quirk; and Mr. Quirk had been forty years in practice—had made the business what it was—still held half of it in his own hands (two-thirds of the remaining half being Gammon's, and the residue Snap's); and Gammon, moreover, had a very distinct perception that the funds for carrying on the war would come out of the tolerably well-stored pockets of their senior partner. So, after a long discussion, he openly yielded his opinion to that of Mr. Quirk,—cherishing, however, no very warm respect for it in his own bosom. As for Snap, that distinguished member of the firm was very little consulted in the matter; which had not yet been brought into that stage where his powerful energies

could come into play. He had of course, however, heard a good deal of what was going on; and knew that ere-long there would be the copying out and serving of the lord knows how many copies of declarations in ejectment, motions against the casual ejector, and so forth—he was quite up to all those quaint and anomalous proceedings. Well, it was agreed that the communication to Titmouse, on his first interview, of the full extent of his splendid expectations, should depend upon the discretion of Mr. Quirk. The reader has seen the unexpected turn which matters took upon that important occasion; and if it proved Quirk's policy to be somewhat inferior in point of discretion and long-sightedness to that of Gammon, still it must be owned that the latter had cause to admire the rapid generalship with which the consequences of Quirk's false move had been retrieved by him—not ill seconded by Snap. What could have been more judicious than his reception of Titmouse, on the occasion of his being led in again by the subtle Gammon?

The next and greatest matter was, how to obtain any hold upon such a person as Titmouse, so as to secure to themselves, in the event of success, the remuneration to which they considered themselves entitled. Was it so perfectly clear that, if he felt disposed to resist it, they could compel him to pay the mere amount of their bill of costs?

Suppose he should turn round upon them, and have their Bill Taxed—Quirk grunted with fright at the bare thought. Then there was a slapping *quiddam honorarium* extra—undoubtedly for *that* they must, they feared, trust to the honour and gratitude of Titmouse; and a pretty taste of his quality they had already experienced! Such a disposition as his to have to rely upon for the prompt settlement of a bill of thousands of pounds of costs; and, besides that, to have it to look to for the payment of at least some five thousand pounds *douceur*—nay, and this was not all. Mr. Quirk had as well as Mr. Gammon, cast many an anxious eye on the following passages from a certain work entitled *Blackstone's Commentaries:*

"Maintenance is an officious intermeddling in a suit that no way belongs to one, by 'maintaining' or assisting

either party with money, or otherwise, to prosecute or defend it.** It is an offence against public justice, as it keeps alive strife and contention, and perverts the remedial process of the law into an engine of oppression.** The punishment by common law is fine and imprisonment, and by statute 32, Hen. VIII. c. 9, a forfeiture of £10!"

"CHAMPERTY—(*campi partitio*)—is a species of maintenance, and punished in the same manner; being a bargain with a plaintiff or defendant '*campum partiri*,' to divide the land, or other matter sued for, between them, if they prevail at law; whereupon the champertor is to carry on the suit at his own expense.** These pests of civil society, that are perpetually endeavouring to disturb the repose of their neighbours, and officiously interfering in other men's quarrels, even at the hazard of their own fortunes, were severely animadverted on by the Roman law; and they were punished by the forfeiture of a third part of their goods, and perpetual infamy."

These are pleasant passages.

Many were the conversations and consultations which the partners had had with Messrs. Mortmain and Frankpledge respectively, upon the interesting question, whether there were any mode of at once securing themselves against the ingratitude of Titmouse, and protecting themselves against the penalties of the law. It made Mr. Quirk's bald head even flush all over whenever he thought of their bill being taxed, or contemplated himself the inmate of a prison, (above all, at his advanced time of life,) with mournful leisure to meditate upon the misdeeds that had sent him thither, to which profitable exercise the legislature would have specially stimulated him by a certain *fine* above mentioned. As for Gammon, he knew there *must* be a way of doing the thing somehow or another; for his friend Frankpledge felt infinitely less difficulty in the way than Mortmain, whom he considered a timid and old-fashioned practitioner.

The courts, he said, were now setting their faces strongly against the doctrine of Maintenance, as being founded on a bygone state of things, (*cessante ratione cessat et ipsa lex*, was his favourite maxim.) There was

no wrong without a remedy, he said; and was there not *wrong* in the case of a poor man wrongfully deprived of his own? And how could this be *remedied*, if the old law of Maintenance stood like a bugbear in the way of humane and spirited practitioners? Was no one to be able to take up the cause of the oppressed, encouraged by the prospect of an ample recompense? If it was said—let the claimant sue in *forma pauperis:* but then he must swear that he is not worth five pounds; and a man may not be able to take that oath, and yet be unequal to the commencement of a suit requiring the outlay of thousands. Moreover, a pretty prospect it was for such a suitor, (*in forma pauperis,*) if he should happen to be nonsuited—to be "put to his election, whether to be whipped or pay the costs."* Thus reasoned within himself that astute person, Mr. Frankpledge; and at length satisfied himself that he had framed an instrument which would "meet the case"—that "would hold water." I am not very well versed in legal matters; but to the best of my recollection it was something in the nature of a bond, conditioned to pay the sum of ten thousand pounds to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, within two months of Titmouse's being put into possession of the rents and profits. The condition of that bond was, as its framer believed, drawn in a masterly manner, and his draft was lying before Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, on the Wednesday morning—*i. e.* the day after Titmouse's interview with them—and had succeeded at length in exciting the approbation of Mr. Quirk himself; when—whew!—down came a note from Mr. Frankpledge, to the effect that, "since preparing the draft bond," he had "had reason *slightly to modify* his original opinion," owing to his "having lit upon a LATE case," in which an instrument precisely similar to the one which he had prepared for his admiring clients, had been held totally "ineffectual and void both at law and in equity." I say, Mr. Frankpledge's note was to that effect; for so ingeniously had he framed it—so effectually concealed his retreat beneath a little cloud of contradictory authorities, like as the ink-fish, they say,

* Blackstone, vol. iii. p. 400, where it is stated, however, "that practice is now disused."

eludeth its pursuers—that his clients cursed the law, not their draftsman: and, moreover, by prudently withholding the *name* of the "late case," he at all events, for a while, had prevented their observing that it was *senior* to some eight or ten cases which (indefatigable man!) he had culled for them out of the legal garden, and arrayed on the back of the draft. Slightly disconcerted were Messrs. Quirk and Gammon, it may be believed, at this new view of the "result of the authorities." "Mortmain is always right!" said Quirk, looking hard at Gammon; who observed simply that one day Frankpledge would be as old as Mortmain then was, by which time (thought he) I also know where *you* will be, my old friend, if there's any truth in the Scriptures! In this pleasant frame of mind were the partners, when the impudent apparition of Huckaback presented itself, in the manner which has been described. Huckaback's commentary on the disgusting text of Titmouse overnight, (as a lawyer would say, in analogy to a well-known term, "Coke upon Littleton,") produced an effect upon their minds which may be guessed at. It was while their minds were under these two soothing influences, *i. e.* of the insolence of Huckaback and the vacillation of Frankpledge, that Mr. Gammon had penned the note to Titmouse, (surely, under the circumstances, one of extraordinary temperance and forbearance,) which had occasioned Titmouse the agonies which I have been attempting faintly to describe;—and that Quirk, summoning Snap into the room, had requested him to give orders for denial to Titmouse if he should again make his appearance at the office; which injunction Snap forthwith delivered in the clerk's room, in a tone and manner that were a model of the imperative mood.

A day or two afterwards, Mr. Quirk, (who was a man that stuck like a limpet to a rock to any point which occurred to him,) in pouring over that page in the fourth volume of Blackstone's Commentaries, where were to be found the passages which have been already quoted, (and which both Quirk and Gammon had long had off by heart,) as he sate one day at dinner, at home, whither he had taken the volume in question, fancied he had at last hit upon a notable crotchet, which, the more he thought of, the more he was struck with; determining to pay a visit in the morning to Mr. Mortmain. The spark of light that

had twinkled till it kindled in the tinder of his mind, was struck by his hard head out of the following sentence of the text in question:—

"A man *may*, however, maintain the suit of his near kinsman, servant, or POOR NEIGHBOUR, out of *charity and compassion*, with impunity; *otherwise*, the punishment is," &c. &c.

Now, it seemed to Mr. Quirk, that the words which I have placed in italics and small capitals, exactly met the case of poor Tittlebat Titmouse. He stuck to that view of the case, till he *almost* began to think that he really had a kind of a sort of a charity and compassion for poor Tittlebat—kept out of his rights—tyrannized over by a vulgar draper in Oxford Street—where, too, no doubt, he was half-starved. "It's a great blessing that one's got the means — and the inclination, to serve one's poor neighbours"—thought Quirk, as he slowly swallowed another glass of the *wine that maketh glad the heart of man*—and also *softens* it;—for the more he drank, (what else had he to enjoy?—for he had been a widower,) the more and more pitiful became his mood—the more sensitive was he to compassionate suggestions; and by the time that he had finished the decanter, he was actually in tears. These virtuous feelings brought their own reward, too—for, from time to time they conjured up the faint image of a bond conditioned for the payment of TEN THOUSAND POUNDS!

To change the metaphor a little—by the time that old Quirk had reached his office in the morning, the heated iron had cooled; if his heart had retained any of the maudlin softness of the preceding evening, the following pathetic letter from Titmouse might have made a very deep impression upon it, and fixed him in the benevolent and disinterested mind of the old lawyer, as indeed his "poor neighbour." The following is an exact copy of it. It had been written by Titmouse, all out of his own head; and with his own hand had he left it, at a late hour on the night before.

"To Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

"Gents,

"Yr Esteem'd Favour his now before Me, which *must say* have Given me Much Concern, seeing I Thought it

was All Made up betwixt us That was of Such an *Unpleasant Nature* on Tuesday night (ultimo) wh I most humbly Own (and Acknowledge) was all alone and *intirely* of my Own Fault, and Not in the Least Your's which behaved to me, Must say, in the most Respectful and superior manner that was possible to think Of, for I truly Say I never was In the Company of Such Imminent and Superior Gents before In my Life wh will take my Oath sincerely Of, Gents. Please to consider the Brandy (wh *do* think *was Uncommon stiff*) such a flustrum As I Was In before, to, wh was Evident to All of Us there then Assemblid and very natral like to be the Case Seeing I have nevir known what Peas of Mind was since I behaved in Such a *Oudacious* way wh truly was the case I can't Deny to Such Gents as Yourselfs that were doing me such Good Fortune And Kindness to me as it would Be a Dreadful *sin and shame* (such as Trust I can never be Guilty of) to be (wh am not) and never Can Be insensible Of, Gents do Consider all this Favourably because of my humble Amends wh I here Make with the greatest Trouble in my Mind that I have Had Ever Since, it was all of the Sperrits I Tooke wh made me Go On at such a Rate wh was always (beg to Assure yr respe house) the Case Since my birth when I took Sperrits near so little Since I had the Measles when I was 3 Years Old as I Well Recollect and hope it will be Born in Mind what is Often Said, and I'm sure I've read it Somewhere Else that People that is Drunk Always speaks the *Direct Contrarywise* of their True and Real Thoughts, (wh am Certain never was any Thing Truer in my case) so as I get the Money or What not, do whatever you like wh are quite welcome to Do if you please, and No questions Asked, don't Mind saying by The Way It shall Be As Good as £200 note in The way of your Respe House if I Get the Estate of wh am much in want of. Mr. Gamon (wh is the most Upright gent that ever I came across in All my Life) will tell you that I Was Quite Cut up when he came After me in that kind Way and told him Then how I loved yr Respecte House and would do all In My power to Serve You, which see if I don't, I was in Such a rage with the Fellow (He's only in a *Situation* in Tottenham C: Road) Huckaback which is his true name it was an *oudacious*

thing, and have given him such a precious Good hiding last Night as you never saw when on his Bendid Knees He asked the pardon of your Respectable House, sayg nothing Of Me wh wd not allow because I said I would Not Forgive Him because he had not injured me: But you, wh I wonder at his *Impudence* in Calling on Professional Gents like you, if I get The Estate shall never cease to Think well of you and mean While how full of Trouble I am *Often Thinking Of Death* which is the End of Every Thing And then in that Case who will the Property Go to Seeing I Have never a Brother or Sister Behind me. And Therefore Them That wd Get it I Feel Sure of wd Not do So Well by you (if You will Only believe me) So Gents. This is All at present That I will Make so Bold to trouble you With about my Unhappy Affairs Only to say that am *used* most Intolerably Bad now In The Shop quite Tyranicall And Mr Tagrag as Set Them All Against Me and I shall Never Get another Situatn for want of a Charr which he will give me sayg nothg at Present of the Sort of Victules wh give me Now to Eat Since Monday last, For Which am Sure the Devil must have Come In to That Gentleman (Mr Tagrag, he was only himself in a situation in Holborn once, getts the Business by marryg the widow wh wonder At for he is nothing particular to Look At.) I am yrs

"Humbly to Command Till Death (always Humbly Begging pardon for the bad Conduct wh was guilty of when In Liquor Especially On an Empty Stomach, Having Taken Nothing all that Day excepting what I could not Eat,)

"Your's most Respy

"TITTLEBAT TITMOUSE.

"P. S. Will Bring That young Man with Tears In his Eyes to Beg yr pardon Over again If You Like wh will Solemnly Swear if Required That he did It all of His *own* Head And that Have given it him For it in the Way That is Written Above And humbly Trust You Will make Me So happy Once more by Writing To Me (if it is only a Line) to say You have Thought No more of it. T. T. No 9 Closet Ct. Oxford Street. 14-7-182–."

This touching epistle, I was saying, might have brought

tears into Mr. Quirk's eyes, if he had been *used* to the melting mood, which he was not; having never been seen to shed a tear but once—when five-sixths of his little bill of costs (£195, 15s. 4d.) were taxed off in an action on a Bill of Exchange for £20. As it was, he tweedled the letter about in his hands for about five minutes, in a musing mood, and then stepped with it into Mr. Gammon's room. That gentleman took the letter with an air of curiosity, and read it over; at every sentence (if indeed a sentence was in it) bursting into soft laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed on concluding it—"a comical gentleman, Mr. Titmouse, upon my honour!"

"Funny—isn't it rather?" interposed Mr. Quirk, standing with his hands fumbling in his breeches pockets.

"What a crawling, despicable rascal!—ha, ha, ha!"

"Why—I don't quite say that, either," said Quirk, doubtingly—"I—don't exactly look at it in *that* light."

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Gammon, leaning back in his chair, and laughing rather heartily—at least for him."

"You can't leave off that laugh of yours," said Quirk, a little tartly; "but I must say I don't see any thing in the letter to laugh at so particularly. It is written in a most respectful manner, and shows a proper feeling towards the House."

"Ay! see how he speaks of *me!*" interrupted Gammon, with such a smile.

"And doesn't he speak so of me? and all of us?

"He'll let the House tread on him till he can tread on the House, I dare say."

"But you must own, Mr. Gammon, it shows we've licked him into shape a bit—eh?"

"Oh, it's a little vile creeping reptile now, and so it will be to the end of the chapter—of our proceedings; and when we've *done* every thing—really Mr. Quirk! if one *were* apt to lose one's temper, it would be to see such a *thing* as that put into possession of such a fortune."

"That may be, Mr. Gammon; but I really—trust—I've a higher feeling—to right—the injured"—— He could go no further.

"Hem!" exclaimed Gammon.

The parties smiled at one another. A touch, or an attempted touch at *disinterestedness*—and at Quirk's time of life!

"But he's now in a humour for *training*, at all events—isn't he?" exclaimed Quirk—"we've something now to go to work upon—gradually."

"Isn't that a leaf out of *my* book, Mr. Quirk? isn't that exactly what"—

"Well, well—what does it signify;" interrupted Quirk, rather petulantly—"I've got a crotchet that'll do for us, yet, about the matter of law, and makes all right and tight,—so I'm going to Mortmain."

"I've got a little idea of my own of that sort, Mr. Quirk," said Gammon—"I've got an extract from Co-Litt—. I can't imagine how either of them could have missed it, and, as Frankpledge dines with me to-day we shall talk it all over. But, by the way, Mr. Quirk, I should say, with all deference, that we'll take no more notice of this fellow till we've got some screw tight enough."

"Why—all that may be very well; but you see, Gammon, the fellow seems the real heir, after all—and if *he* don't get it, *no one can;* and if *he* don't—*we* don't, eh?"

"There's a very great deal of force in that observation, Mr. Quirk," said Gammon emphatically:—and tolerably well pleased with one another, they parted. If Quirk might be compared to an old file, Gammon was the *oil!*—so they got on, in the main, very well together. It hardly signifies what was the result of their interviews with their two conveyancers. They met in the morning on ordinary business; and as each made no allusions whatever to the "crotchet" of the day before, it may be inferred that each had been satisfied by his conveyancer of having found a mare's nest.

"I think, by the way," said Mr. Gammon to Mr. Quirk, before they parted on the previous evening, "it may be as well, all things considered, to acknowledge the receipt of the fellow's note—eh?—*Can't* do any harm, you know, and civility costs nothing—hem!"

"The very thing I was thinking of," replied Quirk, as he always did on hearing any suggestion from Mr Gammon.

So by that night's post was dispatched (post-paid) the following note to Mr. Titmouse:

"Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap have the pleasure of acknowledging the receipt of Mr. Titmouse's polite letter of last night's date; and earnestly beg that he will not distress himself about the little incident that occurred at their office on Tuesday night, and which they assure him they have quite forgotten. They made all allowances, however their feelings suffered at the time. They beg Mr. T. will give them credit for not losing sight of his interests, to the best of their ability, obstructed as they are, however, by numerous serious difficulties. If they should be in any degree hereafter overcome, he may rest assured of their promptly communicating with him; and till then they trust Mr. T. will not inconvenience himself by calling on or writing to them.

"Saffron Hill, 15th July, 182–.

"P. S.—Messrs. Q. G. and S. regret to hear that any unpleasantness has arisen (Gammon could hardly write for laughing) between Mr. Titmouse and his friend Mr. Hicklebagle, who, they assure him, manifested a very warm interest on behalf of Mr. T., and conducted himself with the greatest propriety on the occasion of his calling upon Messrs. Q. G. and S. They happened at that moment to be engaged in matters of the highest importance; which will, they trust, explain any appearance of abruptness they might have exhibited towards that gentleman. Perhaps Mr. Titmouse will be so obliging as to intimate as much to Mr. Hickerbag."

There was an obvious reason for this polite allusion to Huckaback. Gammon thought it very possible that that gentleman might be in Mr. Titmouse's confidence, and exercise a powerful influence over him hereafter; and which influence Messrs. Q. G. and S. might find it well worth their while to secure beforehand.

The moment that Titmouse, with breathless haste, had read over this mollifying document, which being directed to his lodgings correctly, he of course did not obtain till about ten o'clock, he hastened to his friend Huckaback. That gentleman, who seemed now virtually recognised by Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap, as Titmouse's con-

fidant, shook his head ominously, exclaiming—"Blarney, blarney!" and a bitter sneer settled on his disagreeable features, till he had read down to the postscript; the perusal of which effected a sudden change in his feelings. He declared, with a great oath, that Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, were "perfect gentlemen," and would "do the right thing, Titmouse might depend upon it;" an assurance which greatly cheered Titmouse, to whose keen discernment it never once occurred to refer Huckaback's altered tone to the right cause, viz., the lubricating quality of the postscript; and since Titmouse did not allude to it, no more did Mr. Huckaback, although his own double misnomer stuck a little in his throat. So effectual, indeed, had been that most skilful postscript upon the party whom it had been aimed at, that he exerted himself unceasingly to revive Titmouse's confidence in Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and so far succeeded, that Titmouse returned to his lodgings at a late hour, a somewhat happier, if not a wiser man than he had left them. By the time, however, that he had got into bed, having once more spelt over the note in question, he felt as despondent as ever, and thought that Huckaback had not known what he had been talking about. He also adverted to an *apparently* careless allusion by Huckaback to the injuries which had been inflicted upon him by Titmouse on the Wednesday night: and which, by the way, Huckaback determined it should be no fault of his if Titmouse easily forgot! He hardly knew why—but he disliked this particularly. Whom had he, however, in the world, but Huckaback? In company with him alone, Titmouse felt that his pent-up feelings could discharge themselves. Huckaback had certainly a wonderful knack of keeping up Titmouse's spirits, whatever cause he fancied he might really have for depression. In short, he longed for the Sunday morning—ushering in a day of rest and sympathy. Titmouse would indeed then have to look back upon an agitating and miserable week, what with the dismal upsetting of his hopes, in the manner I have described, and the tyrannical treatment he experienced at Dowlas and Co's. Mr. Tagrag began, at length, in some degree, to relax his *active* exertions against Titmouse, simply because of the trouble it gave him to keep them up. He attributed the

pallid cheek and depressed manner of Titmouse entirely to the discipline which had been inflicted upon him at the shop, and was gratified at perceiving that all his other young men seemed, especially in his presence, to have imbibed his hatred of Titmouse. What produced in Tagrag this hatred of Titmouse? Simply what had taken place on the Monday. Mr. Tagrag's dignity and power had been doggedly set at nought by one of his shopmen, who had since refused to make the least submission, or offer any kind of apology. Such conduct struck at the root of subordination in his establishment. Again, there is perhaps nothing in the world so calculated to enrage a petty and vulgar mind to the highest pitch of malignity, as the calm persevering defiance of an inferior, whom it strives to *despise*, while it is only *hating*, which it at the same time feels to be the case. Tagrag now and then looked towards Titmouse, as he stood behind the counter, as if he could have murdered him. Titmouse attempted once or twice, during the week, to obtain a situation elsewhere, but in vain. He could expect no character from Tagrag; and when the 10th of August should have arrived, what was to become of him? These were the kind of thoughts often passing through his mind during the Sunday, which he and Huckaback spent together in unceasing conversation on the one absorbing event of the last week. Titmouse, poor puppy, had dressed himself with just as much care as usual; but as he was giving the finishing touches at his toilet, pumping up grievous sighs every half minute, the sum of his reflections might be stated in the miserable significance of a quaint saying of Poor Richard's,—"How hard is it to make an empty sack stand upright!"

Although the sun shone as vividly and beautifully as on the preceding Sunday, to Titmouse's saddened eye there seemed a sort of gloom every where. Up and down the Park he and Huckaback walked, towards the close of the afternoon; but Titmouse had not so elastic a strut as before. He felt empty and sinking. Every body seemed to know what a sad pretender he was: and they quitted the magic circle much earlier than had been usual with Titmouse. What with the fatigue of a long day's saunter, the vexation of having had but a hasty, inferior, and un-

refreshing meal, which did not deserve the name of dinner, and their unpleasant thoughts, both seemed depressed as they walked along the streets. At length they arrived at the open doors of a gloomy-looking building, into which two or three sad and prim-looking people were entering. After walking a few paces past the door—"D'ye know, Huck," said Titmouse, stopping, "I've often thought that —that—there's something in *Religion*."

"To be sure there is, for those that like it—who doubts it? It's all very well in its place, no doubt," replied Huckaback, with much surprise, which increased, as he felt himself slowly being swayed round towards the building in question. "Well, but what of that?"

"Oh, nothing; but—hem! hem!" replied Titmouse, sinking his voice to a whisper—"a touch of—religion—would not be so much amiss, just now. I feel—uncommon inclined that way, somehow."

"Religion's all very well for them that has much to be thankful for; but devil take me! what have either you or me to be"——

"But, Huck—how do you know but we might *get* something to be thankful for, by praying—I've often heard of great things;—Come."

Huckaback stood for a moment irresolute, twirling about his cane, and looking rather distastefully towards the dingy building. "To be sure," said he, faintly. Titmouse drew him nearer; but he suddenly started back.—"No! oh, 'tis only a meeting house, Tit! Curse Dissenters, how I hate 'em! No—I won't pray in a meeting-house, let me be bad as I may. Give me a regular-like, respectable church, with a proper steeple, and parson, and prayers, and all that."

Titmouse secretly acknowledged the force of these observations; and the intelligent and piously disposed couple, with perhaps a just, but certainly a somewhat sudden regard for orthodoxy, were not long before they had found their way into a church where evening service was being performed. They ascended the gallery stairs; and seeing no reason to be ashamed of being at church, down they both went, with loud clattering steps and a bold air, into the very central seat in the front of the gallery, which happened to be vacant. Titmouse paid a most exemplary

attention to what was going on, kneeling, sitting, and standing with exact propriety, in the proper places; joining audibly in the responses, and keeping his eyes pretty steadily on the prayer-book, which he found lying there. He even rebuked Huckaback for whispering during one of the most solemn parts of the service, that "there was a pretty gal in the next pew!"—He thought that the clergyman was an uncommon fine preacher, and said some things that he *must* have meant for him (Titmouse) in particular.

"Curse me, Hucky!" said he heatedly, as soon as they quitted the church, and were fairly in the street—"Curse me if—if—ever I felt so comfortable-like in my mind before, as I do know—I'll go next Sunday again."

"Lord, Tit, you don't really mean—it's deuced dull."

"Hang me if I don't, though! and if any thing should come of it—if I do but get the estate. I wonder now, where *Mr. Gammon* goes to church—I should like to know!—I'd go there regularly. But if I *do* get the thing—you see if I don't."

"Ah, I don't know; it's not much use praying for money, Tit; I've tried it myself, once or twice, but it didn't answer."

"I'll take my oath you was staring at the gals all the while, Hucky!"

"Ah, Titty!" Huckaback winked his eye, and put the tip of his forefinger to the tip of his nose, and laughed.

CHAPTER III.

Titmouse continued in what he doubtless imagined to be a devout frame of mind, for several minutes after quitting the church, at the door of which I left him. But close by the aforesaid church, the devil had a thriving little establishment, in the shape of a cigar-shop: in which a showily dressed young Jewess sat behind the counter, right underneath a glaring gas-light—with a thin stripe of greasy black velvet across her forehead, and long ringlets that rested on her shoulders—bandying slang with two or three other such puppies as Titmouse and Huckaback. Our friends entered and purchased a cigar a-piece, which they lit on the spot; and after each of them had exchanged an impudent wink with the Jewess, out they went, puffing away—all the remains of their piety! When they had come to the end of their cigars, they parted, each speeding homeward. Titmouse, on reaching his lodgings, sunk into profound depression. He felt an awful conviction that his visit to the cigar-shop had entirely spoiled the effect of his previous attendance at the church, and that, if so disposed, he might now sit and whistle for his ten thousand a-year. Thoughts such as these drove him nearly distracted. If, indeed, he had foreseen having to go through such another week as the one just over, I think it not impossible that before the arrival of the ensuing Sunday, Mr. Titmouse might have afforded a little employment to that ancient but gloomy functionary, a coroner, and his jury. At that time, however, inquests of this sort were matter-of-fact and melancholy affairs enough; which I doubt not would have been rather a *dissuasive* from suicide, in the estimation of one who might be supposed ambitious of the *eclat* of a modern inquest; where, indeed, such strange antics are played by certain new performers as would suffice to revive the corpse, (if it were a corpse that had ever had a spark of

sense or spirit in it,) and make it kick the coroner out of the room. But to one of so high an ambition as Tittlebat Titmouse, how delightful would it not have been, to anticipate becoming (what had been quite impracticable during life) the object of public attention after his death—by means of a flaming dissertation by the coroner upon his own zeal and spirit—the nature and extent of his rights, powers, and duties;—when high doctors are brow-beaten, the laws set at defiance, and public decency plucked by the beard, and the torn and bleeding hearts of surviving relatives still further agonized by an exposure, all quivering under the recent stroke, to the gaping vulgar! Indeed, I sometimes think that the object of certain coroners now-a-days is twofold,—first, public—to disgust people with suicide, by showing what horrid proceedings will take place over their carcasses; and secondly, private—to get the means of studying anatomy by *post mortems*, which the said coroner never could procure in his own practice; which enable us to account for some things one has lately seen, viz: that if a man come to his death by means of a wagon crushing his legs, the coroner institutes an exact examination of the structure of the *lungs* and *heart*. I take it to be now getting into a rule—the propriety whereof, some people think, cannot be doubted—namely, that bodies ought now to be opened only to prove that they ought not to have been opened; an inquest must be held, in order to demonstrate that it need not have been held, except that certain fees thereby find their way into the pocket of the aforesaid coroner, which would otherwise not have done so. In short, such a coroner as I have in my eye may be compared to a great ape squatting on a corpse, furiously chattering and spitting all around it; and I am glad that it hath at last had wit enough first to *shut the door* before proceeding to its horrid tricks.

Touching the *moral* of suicide, it is the way which some have of *cutting* the Gordian knot of the difficulties of life; which having been done, possibly the very first thing that is made manifest to the spirit, after taking its mad leap in the dark, is—how very easily the said knot might have been UNTIED; nay, that it was *on the very point* of being untied, if the impatient spirit had stayed

only a moment longer:—a dismal discovery, which may excite ineffable grief at the folly and horror of the crime of which such spirit has been guilty. But ah! it is too late! The triumphant fiend has secured his victim. I said that it was not *impossible* that Mr. Titmouse might, under the circumstances alluded to, have done the deed which has called forth the above very natural and profound reflections; but, upon the whole, it is hardly *probable*, for he knew that by doing so he would (first) irreparably injure society, by depriving it of an enlightened and invaluable member; (secondly,) inflict great indignity on his precious body, of which, during life, he had always taken the most affectionate care, by securing for it a burial in a cross road, at night time, with a stake run through it,* and moreover, peril the little soul that had just leaped out of it, by not having any burial service said over his aforesaid remains; and (lastly) lose all chance of enjoying Ten Thousand a-Year—at least upon earth. I own I was a little startled (as I dare say was the reader) at a passage of mournful significance in Mr. Titmouse's last letter to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, viz.: "How full of trouble I am, *often thinking of death*, which is the end of every thing;" but on carefully considering the context, I am disposed to think that the whole was only a device of Titmouse's, either to rouse the fears, or stimulate the feelings, or excite the hopes, of the three arbiters of his destiny to whom it was addressed. Mr. Gammon, he thought, might be thereby moved to pity; while Mr. Quirk would probably be operated upon by fears, lest the sad contingency pointed at might deprive the house of one who would richly repay their exertions; and by hopes of indefinite advantage, if they could by any means prevent its happening. I have often questioned Titmouse on the subject, but he would only wink his eye, and say that he "knew *what to be at*" as well as any one! That these gentlemen really *did* keenly scrutinize, and carefully weigh every expression in that letter, ridiculous as it was, and contemptible as, I fear, it showed

* A very learned person tells me that this mode of treating the remains of a *felo de se*, though prevailing at the time when the events occurred which are above narrated, was soon afterwards (*i. e.* on the 8th of July, 1823) abolished by Act of Parliament.

its writer to be, is certain; but it did not occur to them to compare with it, at least, the spirit and intention of their own answer to it. Did the latter document contain less cunning and insincerity, because it was couched in somewhat superior phraseology? They could conceal their selfish and overreaching designs, while poor Titmouse exposed all his little mean-mindedness and hypocrisy, simply because he had not learned how to conceal it effectually. 'Twas indeed a battle for the very same object, but between unequal combatants. Each was trying to take the other in. If Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap despised and loathed the man to whom they exhibited such anxious courtesy, Titmouse hated and feared those whom his interests compelled him for a while to conciliate. Was there, in fact, a pin to choose between them—except, perhaps, that Titmouse was, in a manner, excused by his necessities? But, in the meanwhile, his circumstances were becoming utterly desperate. He continued to endure great suffering at Mr. Tagrag's during the day—the constant butt of the ridicule and insult of his amiable companions, and the victim of his employer's vile spirit of hatred and oppression. His spirit, (such as it was,) in short, was very nearly broken. Though he seized every opportunity that offered to inquire for another situation, he was unsuccessful! for all whom he applied to spoke of the *strict character* they should require, "before taking a new hand into their establishment." His occupation at nights, after quitting the shop, was twofold only—either to call upon Huckaback, (whose sympathy, however, he was exhausting rapidly,) or solace his feelings by walking down to Saffron Hill, and lingering about the closed office of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—there was a kind of gratification even in that! He once or twice felt flustered even on catching a glimpse of the old housekeeper returning from some little errand. How he would have rejoiced to get into her good graces, and accompany her into even the kitchen—when he would be in the premises, and conversing with one of the establishment of those who he believed could, with a stroke of their pens, turn this wilderness of a world into a paradise for him! But he dared not make any overtures in that

quarter, for fear of their getting to the notice of the dreaded Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap.

At length, no more than three or four shillings stood between him and utter destitution; and the only person in the world whom he could apply to for even the most trivial assistance, was Huckaback—whom, however, he knew to be scarcely any better off than himself; and whom, moreover, he felt to be treating him more and more coldly, as the week wore on without his hearing of any the least tidings from Saffron Hill. Huckaback evidently felt now scarcely any interest or pleasure in the visits of his melancholy friend, and was plainly disinclined to talk about his affairs. At length he quite turned up his nose with disgust, whenever Titmouse took out the well-worn note of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, which was almost dropping to pieces with being constantly carried about in his pocket, taken in and out, and folded and unfolded, for the purpose of conning over its contents, as if there might yet linger in it some hitherto undiscovered source of consolation. Poor Titmouse, therefore, looked at it on every such occasion with as eager and vivid an interest as ever; but it was glanced at by Huckaback with a half-averted eye, and a cold, drawling, yawning, "Ya—a—as—I see—I—dare—say!" As his impressions of Titmouse's bright prospects were thus being rapidly effaced, his smarting recollections of the drubbing he had received became distincter and more frequent; his feelings of resentment more lively, and not the less so, because the expression of them had been stifled, (while he had considered the star of Titmouse to be in the ascendant,) till the time for setting them into motion and action had gone by. In fact the presence of Titmouse, suggesting such thoughts and recollections, became intolerable to Huckaback; and Titmouse's perceptions (dull as they naturally were, but a little quickened by recent suffering, gave him more and more distinct notice of this circumstance, at the precise time when he meditated applying for the loan of a few shillings. These feelings made him as humble towards Huckaback, and as patient of his increasing rudeness and ill-humour, as he felt abject towards Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; for, unless he could

succeed in wringing some trifling loan from Huckaback, (if he really had it in his power to advance him *any thing*,) he could not conjecture what was to become of him. Various faint but unadroit hints and feelers of his had been thrown away; for Huckaback either did not, or could not, comprehend them. But at length a sudden and fearful pressure compelled him to speak out. Gripe, the collector, called one morning for the poor's rates due from Mrs. Squallop, (Titmouse's landlady,) and cleaned her out of almost every penny of ready money which she had by her. This threw the good woman upon her resources, to replenish her empty pocket—and down she came upon Titmouse—or rather, up she went to him; for his heart sunk within him one night on his return from the shop, having only just taken off his hat and lit his candle, as he heard the fat old termagant's well-known heavy step ascending the stairs, and approaching nearer and nearer to his door. Her loud imperative single knock vibrated through his heart, and he was ready to drop.

"Oh, Mrs. Squallop! How d'ye do, Mrs. Squallop?" commenced Titmouse, faintly, when he had opened the door. "Won't you take a chair?" offering to the panting dame almost the only chair he had.

"No—I ain't come to stay, Mr. Titmouse, because, d'ye see, in coorse you've got a pound, at least, ready for me, as you promised long ago—and never more welcome; there's old Gripe has been here to-day, and had his hodious rates—(drat the poor, say I! them as can't work should starve!—rates is a robbery!)—but howsomdever he's cleaned *me* out to-day; so, in coorse, I come up to *you*. Got it?"

"I—I—I—'pon my life, Mrs. Squallop, I'm uncommon sorry—"

"Oh, bother your sorrow, Mr. Titmouse!—out with the needful, for I can't stop palavering here."

"I—I can't, so help me ——!" gasped Titmouse, with the calmness of desperation.

"You can't! And marry, sir, why not, may I make bold to ask?" inquired Mrs. Squallop, after a moment's pause, striving to choke down her rage.

"P'r'aps you can get blood out of a stone, Mrs. Squallop; it's what I can't," replied Titmouse, striving to screw his

courage up to the sticking place, to encounter one who was plainly bent upon mischief. "I've got two shillings —there they are," throwing them on the table; "and cuss me if I've another rap in the world; there ma'am!"

"You're a liar, then, that's flat!" exclaimed Mrs. Squallop, slapping her hand upon the table, with a violence that made the candle quiver on it, and almost fall down. "You have the *himperance*," said she, commencing the address she had been preparing in her own mind ever since Mr. Gripe had quitted her house, "to stand there and tell me you've got nothing in the world but them *two shillings!* Heugh! Out on you, you oudacious fellow!—you jack-a-dandy! *You* tell me you haven't got more than them two shillings, and yet turns out every Sunday morning of your life like a lord, with your pins, and your rings, and your chains, and your fine coat, and your gloves, and your spurs, and your dandy cane—ough! you whipper-snapper! You're a cheat—you're a swindler, jack-a-dandy! You're the contempt of the whole court, you are, you jack-a-dandy! You've got all my rent on your back, and have had every Sunday for three months, you cheat!—you low fellow!—you ungrateful chap! You're a-robbing the widow and fatherless! Look at me, and my six fatherless children down there, you good-for-nothing, nasty, proud puppy!—eugh! it makes me sick to see you. *You* dress yourself out like my lord mayor! You've bought a gold chain with my rent, you rascally cheat! *You* dress yourself out?—Ha, ha!—you're a nasty, mean-looking, humpty-dumpty, carroty-headed—"

"You'd better not say *that* again, Mrs. Squallop."

"Not say it again!—ha, ha! Hoighty-toighty, carroty-haired jack-a-dandy!—why, you hop-o-my-thumb! d'ye think I won't say whatever I choose, and in my own house? You're a Titmouse by name and by nature; there ain't a cockroach crawling down stairs that ain't more respectable-like and better behaved than you. You're a himpudent cheat, and dandy, and a knave, and a liar, and a red-haired rascal—and that in your teeth! Ough! Your name stinks in the court. You're a-taking of every body in as will trust you to a penny's amount. There's poor old Cox, the tailor, with a sick wife and

children, whom you've cheated this many months, all of his not having spirit to summon you! But *I'll* set him upon you; you see if I don't—and I'll have my own, too, or I wouldn't give *that* for the laws!" shouted Mrs. Squallop, at the same time snapping her fingers in his face, and then pausing for breath after her eloquent invective.

"Now what is the use," said Titmouse, gently, being completely cowed—"now what good can it do to go on in this way, Mrs. Squallop?"

"Missus me no Missus, Mr. Titmouse, but pay me my rent, you jack-a-dandy! You've got my rent on your back, and on your little fingers; and I'll have it off before I've done with you, I warrant you. I'm your landlady, and I'll sell you out; I'll have old Thumbscrew here the first thing in the morning, and distrain every thing, and you, too, you jackdaw, if any one would buy you, which they won't! I'll have my rent at last; I've been too easy with you, you ungrateful chap; for, mark, even Mr. Gripe this morning says, 'haven't you a gentleman lodger up above? get him to pay you your own,' says he; and so I will. I'm sick of all this, and I'll have my rights! Here's my son, Jem, a far better looking chap than you, though he *hasn't* got hair like a mop all under his chin, and he's obligated to work from one week's end to another in a paper cap and fustian jacket; and you—you painted jackanapes! But now I have got you, and I'll turn you inside out, though I know there's nothing in you! But I'll try to get at your fine coats, and spurs, and trowsers, your chains and pins, and make something of them before I've done with you, you jack-a-dandy!"—and the virago shook her fist at him, looking as though she had not yet uttered even half that was in her heart towards him.

Alas! alas! unhappy Titmouse, much-enduring son of sorrow! I perceive that you now feel the sharpness of an angry female tongue; and indeed to me, not in the least approving of the many coarse and heart-splitting expressions which she uses, it seems nevertheless that she is not very far off the mark in much that she hath said; for, in truth, in your conduct there is not a little that to me, piteously inclined towards you as I am, yet appeareth obnoxious to the edge of this woman's re-

proaches. But think not, O bewildered and not-with-sufficient-distinctness-discerning-the-nature-of-things Titmouse! that she hath only a sharp and bitter tongue. In this woman behold a mother, and it may be that she will soften before you, who have plainly, as I hear, neither father nor mother. Oh me!

Titmouse trembled violently; his lips quivered; and the long pent-up tears forced their way at length over his eyelids, and fell fast down his cheeks.

"Ay, you may well cry!—you may! But it's too late!—it's my turn to cry now! Don't you think that I feel for my own flesh and blood, that is my six children? And isn't what's mine theirs? And aren't you keeping the fatherless out of their own? It's too bad of you—it is! and you know it is," continued Mrs. Squallop, vehemently.

"*They've* got a mother to take—care of them," Titmouse sobbed; "but there's been no one in the—the—world that cares a straw for *me*—this twenty—years!" He fairly wept aloud.

"Well, then, more's the pity for *you*. If you had, they wouldn't have let you make such a puppy of yourself—and at your landlady's expense, too. You know you're a fool," said Mrs. Squallop, dropping her voice a little; for she was a *mother*, after all, and she knew that what poor Titmouse had just stated was quite true. She tried hard to keep up the fire of her wrath, by forcing into her thoughts every aggravating topic against Titmouse that she could think of: but it became every moment harder and harder to do so, for she was consciously softening rapidly towards the weeping and miserable object on whom she had been heaping such violent and bitter abuse. He was a great fool, to be sure; he was very fond of fine clothes—he knew no better—he had, however, paid his rent well enough, till lately—he was a very quiet, well disposed lodger, for all *she* had known—he had given her youngest child a pear not long ago. Really, she thought, I may have gone a *little* too far.

"Come—it ain't no use crying in this way. It won't put money into your pocket, nor my rent into mine. You know you've wronged me, and I *must* be paid," she added, but in a still lower tone. She tried to cough away

a certain rising disagreeable sensation about her throat, that kept increasing; for Titmouse, having turned his back to hide the extent of his emotions, seemed half choked with suppressed sobs.

"So you won't speak a word—not a word—to the woman you've injured so much?" inquired Mrs. Squallop, trying to assume a harsher tone, but her eyes were a little obstructed with tears.

"I—I—*can't* speak," sobbed Titmouse; "I—I feel ready to drop—every body hates me." Here he paused; and for some moments neither spoke. "I've been kept on my legs the whole day about the town by Mr. Tagrag, and had no dinner. I—I—wish I was *dead!* I do!—you may take all I have—here it is"—continued Titmouse, pushing with his foot towards Mrs. Squallop the old hair trunk that contained all his little finery—"I sha'n't want them much longer—for I'm turned out of my situation."

This was too much for Mrs. Squallop, and she was obliged to wipe her full eyes with the corner of her apron, without saying a word. Her heart smote her for the misery she had inflicted on one who seemed quite broken down. Pity suddenly flew, fluttering his wings—soft dove!—into her heart, and put to flight in an instant all her enraged feelings. "Come, Mr. Titmouse," said she, in quite an altered tone—"never mind *me;* I'm a plain-spoken woman enough, I dare say—and often say more than I mean—for I know I ain't over particular when my blood's up—but—I—I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, poor chap!—for all I've said—no, not for double the rent you owe me. Come! don't go on so, Mr. Titmouse—what's the use? it's all quite—over—I'm *so* sorry—Lud! if I'd *really* thought"—she almost sobbed—"you'd been so—so—why, I'd have waited till to-morrow night before I'd said a word. But Mr. Titmouse, since you haven't had any dinner, won't you have a mouthful of something—a bit of bread and cheese?—I'll soon fetch you up a bit, and a drop of beer—we've just had it in for our supper."

"No, thank you—I can't—I can't eat."

"Oh, bother it, but you *shall!* I'll go down and fetch it up in half a minute, as sure as my name's Squallop!" And out of the room, and down stairs she bustled, glad of a moment to recover herself.

"Lord-a-mercy!" said she, on entering her room, to her eldest daughter and a neighbour who had just come in to supper—and while she hastily cut a thick hunch of bread, and a good slice of cheese—"there I've been a rating that poor chap, up at the top room (my dandy lodger, you know,) like any thing—and I really don't think he's had a morsel of victuals in his belly this precious day; and I've made him cry, poor soul! as if his heart would break. Pour us out half a pint of that beer, Sally—a *good* half pint, mind!—I'm going to take it up stairs directly. I've gone a deal too far with him, I do think—but it's all of that nasty old Gripe—I've been wrong all the day through it! How I hate the sight of old Gripe!—What odious looking people they do get to collect the rates and taxes, to be sure!—Poor chap," she continued, as she wiped out a plate with her apron, and put into it the bread and cheese, with a knife—"he offered me a chair when I went in, so uncommon civil-like, it took a good while before I could get myself into the humour to give it to him as I wanted. And he's no father nor mother, (half of which has happened to *you*, Sal, and the rest will happen one of these days, you know!) and he's not such a very bad lodger, after all, though he *does* get a little behind-hand now and then, and though he turns out every Sunday like a lord, poor fool—as my poor husband used to say, 'with a shining back and empty belly.'"

"But that's no reason why honest people should be kept out of their own, to feed his pride," interposed her neighbour, a skinny old widow, who had never had chick nor child, and was always behind-hand with her own rent; but whose effects were not worth distraining upon. "I'd get hold of some of his fine crinkum-crankums and gimcracks for security like, if I were you. I would, indeed."

"Why—no, poor soul—I don't hardly like: he's a vain creature, and puts every thing he can on his back, to be sure; but he a'n't quite a *rogue*, neither."

"Ah, ha, Mrs. Squallop—you're such a simple soul! Won't my fine gentleman make off with his finery after to-night?"

"Well, I should'nt have thought it! To be sure he may!

Really, there *can't* be much harm in asking him (in a kind way) to deposit one of his fine things with me, by way of security—that ring of his, you know,—eh?—Well, I'll try it," said Mrs. Squallop, as she set off up stairs.

"I know what *I* should do, if he was a lodger of *mine*, that's all," said her visiter, (as Mrs. Squallop quitted the room,) vexed to find their supper so considerably and unexpectedly diminished, especially as to the pot of porter, which she strongly suspected would not be replenished.

"There," said Mrs. Squallop, setting down on the table what she had brought for Titmouse, "there's a bit of supper for you; and you're welcome to it, I'm sure, Mr. Titmouse."

"Thank you, thank you—I can't eat," said he, casting, however, upon the victuals a hungry eye, which belied what he said, while in his heart he longed to be left alone with them for about three minutes.

"Come, don't be ashamed—fall to work—it's good wholesome victuals," said she, lifting the table near to the edge of the bed, on the side of which he was sitting, and taking up the two shillings lying on the table—"and capital beer I warrant me: you'll sleep like a top after it."

"You're uncommon kind," Mrs. Squallop; but I shan't get a wink of sleep to-night, for thinking."

"Oh, bother your thinking! Let me see you begin to eat a bit. Well, I suppose you don't like to eat and drink before me, so I'll go." Here arose a sudden conflict in the good woman's mind, whether or not she would act on the suggestion which had been put into her head down stairs. She was on the point of yielding to the impulse of her own good-natured, though coarse feelings; but at last "I—I—dare say, Mr. Titmouse, you mean what's right and straightforward," she stammered.

"Yes, Mrs. Squallop, you may keep those two shillings; they're the last farthing I've left in the whole world."

"No—hem! hem!—a hem! I was just suddenly a thinking—now can't you guess, Mr. Titmouse?"

"What, Mrs. Squallop?" inquired Titmouse, meekly, but anxiously.

"Why—suppose now—if it were only to raise ten shillings with old Balls, round the corner, on one of those fine things of yours—your ring, say." Titmouse's heart

sunk within him. "Well—well—never mind—don't fear," said Mrs. Squallop, observing him suddenly turn pale again. I—I only thought—but never mind! it don't signify—good night! we can talk about that to-morrow—good night—a good night's rest to you, Mr. Titmouse!" and the next moment he heard her heavy step descending the stairs. Several minutes had elapsed before he could recover from the agitation into which he had been thrown by her last proposal; but within ten minutes of her quitting the room, there stood before him, on the table, an *empty* plate and jug.

"The beast! the fat old toad!" thought he, the instant that he had finished masticating what had been supplied to him by real charity and good-nature,—"the vulgar wretch!—the nasty canting old hypocrite!—I saw what she was driving at all the while!—She had her eye on my ring!—She'd have me pawn it at old Ball's—ha, ha! Catch me! that's all! Seven shillings a-week for this nasty hole!—I'll be bound I pay nearly half the rent of the whole house—the old cormorant!—out of what she gets from me! How I hate her! More than half my salary goes into her greasy pocket! Cuss me if I could'nt have kicked her down stairs—porter, bread and cheese, and all—while she was standing canting there! A snivelling old beldam! Pawn my ring!!—Lord!!" Here he began to undress. "Ha! I'm up to her; she'll be coming here to-morrow, with that devil, Thumbscrew, to distrain, I'll be sworn. Well—I'll take care of *these*, any how;" and, kneeling down, and unlocking his trunk, he took out of it his guard-chain, breast-pin, studs, and ring, carefully folded them up in paper, and depositing them in his trowsers' pocket, resolved that henceforth their nightly resting-place should be—under his pillow; while during the day they should accompany his person whithersoever he went. Next he bethought himself of the two or three important papers to which Mr. Gammon had referred; and, with tremulous eagerness, read them over once or twice, but without being able to extract from them the slightest meaning. Then he folded them up in a half-sheet of writing paper, which he proceeded to stitch carefully beneath the lining of his waistcoat: after which he blew out his slim candle, and with a heavy sigh got into

bed. For some moments after he had blown out the candle, did the image of it remain on his aching and excited retina; and just so long did the thoughts of *ten thousand a-year* dwell on his fancy, fading, however, quickly away amid the thickening gloom of doubts, and fears, and miseries, which oppressed him. There he lies, stretched on his bed, a wretched figure, lying on his breast, his head buried beneath his feverish arms. Anon, he turns round upon his back, stretches his weary limbs to their uttermost, folds his arms on his breast, then buries them beneath the pillow, under his head. Now he turns on his right side, then on his left—presently he starts up, and with muttered curses shakes his little pillow, flinging it down angrily. He cannot sleep—he cannot rest—he cannot keep still. Bursting with irritability, he gets out of bed, and steps to the window, which opening wide, a slight gush of fresh air cools his hot face for a moment or two. His wearied eye looks upwards and beholds the moon shining overhead in cold splendour, turning the clouds to gold as they flit past her, and shedding a softened lustre upon the tiled roofs and irregular chimney-pots—the only objects visible to him. No sound is heard, but occasionally the dismal cry of a disappointed cat, the querulous voice of the watchman, and the echo of the rumbling hubbub of Oxford Street. O, miserable Titmouse, of what avail is it for thee thus to fix thy sorrowful lack-lustre eye upon the cold queen of night.

* * * * *

At that moment there happened to be also gazing at the same glorious object, but at some two hundred miles distance from London, a somewhat different person, with very different feelings, and in very different circumstances. It was one of the angels of the earth—a pure-hearted and very beautiful young woman; who, after a day of peaceful, innocent, and charitable employment, and having just quitted the piano, where her exquisite strains had soothed and delighted the feelings of her brother, harassed with political anxieties, had retired to her chamber for the night. A few moments before she was presented to the reader, she had extinguished her taper, and dismissed her maid without her having discharged more than half her accustomed duties—telling her that she should finish un-

dressing by the light of the moon, which then poured her soft radiance into every corner of the spacious but old-fashioned chamber in which she sat. Then she drew her chair to the window recess, and pushing open the window, sat before it, half undressed as she was, her head leaning on her hand, gazing upon the scenery before her with tranquil admiration. Silence reigned absolutely. Not a sound issued from the ancient groves, which spread far and wide on all sides of the fine old mansion in which she dwelt—solemn solitudes, nor yet less soothing than solemn! Was not the solitude enhanced by a glimpse she caught of a restless fawn, glancing in the distance across the avenue, as he silently changed the tree under which he slept? Then the gentle breeze would enter her window, laden with sweet scents of which he had just been rifling the coy flowers beneath, in their dewy repose, tended and petted during the day by her own delicate hand! Beautiful moon!—cold and chaste in thy skyey palace, studded with brilliant and innumerable gems, and shedding down thy rich and tender radiance upon this lovely seclusion—was there upon the whole earth a more exquisite countenance then turned towards thee than hers? Wrap thy white robe, dearest Kate, closer round thy fair bosom, lest the night breeze do thee hurt! Thy rich tresses, half uncurled, are growing damp—so it is time that thy blue eyes should seek repose. Hie thee, then, to yon antique couch, with its quaint carvings and satin draperies dimly visible in the dusky shade, inviting thee to sleep: and having first bent in cheerful reverence before thy Maker—to bed!—to bed!—dear Kate, nothing disturbing thy serene thoughts, or agitating that beautiful bosom. Hush! hush! Now she sleeps.

It is well that thine eyes are closed in sleep; for, behold—see!—the brightness without is disappearing; sadness and gloom are settling on the face of nature; the tranquil night is changing her aspect; clouds are gathering, winds are moaning; the moon is gone: but sleep on, sweet Kate—sleep on, dreaming not of dark days before thee!—Oh, that thou couldst sleep on till the brightness returned!

* * * * *

After having stood thus leaning against the window for

nearly half an hour, Titmouse, heavily sighing, returned to bed—but there he tossed about in wretched restlessness till nearly four o'clock in the morning. If he now and then sank into forgetfulness for a while, it was only to be harassed by the dreadful image of Mrs. Squallop, shouting at him, tearing his hair, cuffing him, flinging a pot of porter in his face, opening his boxes, tossing his clothes about, taking out his invaluable ornaments; by Tagrag kicking him out of the shop; and Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, dashing past him in a fine carriage, with six horses, and paying no attention to him as he ran shouting and breathless after them; Huckaback following, kicking and pinching him behind. These were the few little bits of different-coloured glass in a mental kaleidoscope, which, turned capriciously round, produce those innumerable fantastic combinations out of the simple and ordinary events of the day, which we call *dreams*—tricks of the wild sisters Fancy, when sober Reason has left her seat for a while. But this is fitter for the Royal Society than the bedroom of Tittlebat Titmouse; and I beg the reader's pardon.

About six o'clock, Titmouse rose and dressed himself; and slipping noiselessly and swiftly down stairs, and out of the court, in order to avoid all possibility of encountering his landlady or his tailor, soon found himself in Oxford Street. Not many people were stirring there. One or two men who passed him were smoking their morning's pipe with a half-awakened air, as if they had only just got out of a snug bed, in which they always slept every moment that they lay upon it. Titmouse almost envied them! What a squalid figure he looked, as he paced up and down, till at length he saw the porter of Messrs. Dowlas & Co. opening the shop door. He soon entered it, and commenced another joyous day in that delightful establishment. The amiable Mr. Tagrag continued unaltered.

"You're at liberty to take yourself off, sir, this very day—this moment, sir; and a good riddance," said he, bitterly, during the course of the day, after demanding of Titmouse how he dared to give himself such sullen airs; "and then we shall see how charming easy it is for gents like you to get another sitiwation, sir! Your looks and

manner is quite a recommendation, sir! If I was you, sir, I'd raise my terms! You're worth double what I give, sir!" Titmouse made no reply. "What the d—l do you mean, sir, by not answering me—eh, sir?" suddenly demanded Tagrag with a look of fury.

"I don't know what you'd have me say, sir. What am I to say, sir?" inquired Titmouse with a sigh.

"What, indeed! I should like to catch you! Say, indeed! Only say a word—and out you go, neck and crop. Attend to that old lady coming in, sir. And mind, sir, I've got my eye on you!" Titmouse did as he was bid; and Tagrag, a bland smile beaming in his attractive features, hurried down towards the door, to receive some lady-customers, whom he observed alighting from a carriage; and at that moment you would have sworn that he was one of the kindest-hearted, sweetest-tempered men in the world.

When at length *this* day had come to a close, Titmouse, instead of repairing to his lodgings, set off, with a heavy heart, to pay a visit to his excellent friend Huckaback, whom he knew to have received his quarter's salary the day before, and from whom he faintly hoped to succeed in extorting some trifling loan. "If you want to learn the value of money, *try to borrow some*," says poor Richard—and Titmouse was now going to learn that useful but bitter lesson. Oh, how disheartening was that gentleman's reception of him! Huckaback, in answering the modest knock of Titmouse, suspecting who was his visiter, opened the door but a little way, and in that little way, with his hand on the latch, he stood with a plainly repulsive look.

"Oh! it's you, Titmouse, is it?" he commenced coldly.

"Yes. I—I just want to speak a word to you—only a word or two, Huckey, if you aren't busy?"

"Why, I was just going to go—but what d'ye want, Titmouse?" he inquired, in a freezing manner, not stirring from where he stood.

"*Let* me come inside a minute," implored Titmouse, feeling as if his heart were really dropping out of him; and, in a most ungracious manner, Huckaback motioned him in.

"Well?" commenced Huckaback, with a chilling distrustful look.

"Why, Huck, I know you're a good-natured chap—you *couldn't* just for a short time lend me ten shill——"

"No, I'm hang'd if I can: and that's flat!" briskly interrupted Huckaback, finding his worst suspicions confirmed.

"Why, Hucky, wasn't you only yesterday paid your salary?"

"Well!—suppose I was!—what then? You're a monstrous cool hand, Titmouse!—I never! So I'm to lend to you, when I'm starving myself! I've received such a lot, haven't I?"

"I thought we'd always been friends, Hucky," said Titmouse, faintly; and so we should'nt mind helping one another a bit! Don't you remember, I lent you half-a-crown?"

"Half-a-crown!—and that's nine months ago!"

"Do, Hucky, do! I've positively not a sixpence in the whole world."

"Ha, ha! a pretty chap to borrow! you can pay so well! By George, Titmouse, you're a cool hand."

"If you won't lend me, I must starve."

"Go to *my uncle's*." Titmouse groaned aloud.—"Well, and why not? What of that?" continued Huckaback, sharply and bitterly. "I dare say it would'nt be the first time you've done such a trick, no more than me. I've been obligated to do it. Why shouldn't you? Ain't there that ring?"

"Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! that's just what Mrs. Squallop said last night."

"Whew! *she's* down on you, is she? And you've the face to come to me! *You*—that's a-going to be sold up, come to borrow! Lord, that's good, any how! A queer use that to make of one's friends;—it's a taking of them in, I say!"

"Oh, Huck, Huck, if you only knew what a poor devil"——

"Yes, that's what I was a-saying; but it ain't poor devils one lends money to so easily, I warrant me; though you *ain't* such a poor devil—you're only shamming! Where's your guard-chain, your studs, your breast-pin, your ring, and all that. Sell 'em! if not, any how, *pawn* 'em. Can't eat your cake and have it; fine back must have empty belly with us sort of chaps."

"If you'll only be so kind as to lend me ten shillings," continued Titmouse, in an imploring tone, "I'll bind myself by a solemn oath to pay you the very first moment I get what is due to me from Dowlas & Co." Here he was almost choked by the sudden recollection that he had almost certainly nothing to receive.

"You've some property in the moon, too, that's coming to you, you know!" said Huckaback with an insulting sneer.

"I know what you're driving at," said poor Titmouse; he continued eagerly, "and if any thing *should* ever come up from Messrs. Quirk, Gam——"

"Yough! faugh! pish! stuff!" burst out Huckaback, in a tone of contempt and disgust; "*never* thought there was any thing in it, and now *know* it! It's all in my eye, and all that!"

"Oh, Hucky, Hucky! You don't say so!" groaned Titmouse, bursting into tears; "you didn't *always* say so."

"It's enough that I say it *now* then; will that do?" interrupted Huckaback, impetuously.

"Oh, Lord, Lord! what is to become of me?" cried Titmouse, with a face full of anguish.

At this moment, the following was the course of thought passing through the mind of Mr. Huckaback:—It is not *certain* that nothing will come of the fellow's affair with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. It was hardly likely they would have gone as far as Titmouse represented (lawyers as they were) unless they had seen very substantial grounds for doing so. Besides, even though Titmouse might not get ten thousand a-year, he might yet succeed in obtaining a very splendid sum of money; and if he (Huckaback) could but get a little slice out of it! Titmouse was now nearly desperate, and would promise any thing; and if he could but be wheedled into giving any thing in writing—Well, thought Huckaback, I'll try it, however!

"Ah, Titmouse, you're civil enough *now*, and would *promise* any thing," said Huckaback, appearing to hesitate; "but when you get your money you'd forget."

"Forget my promise! dear Hucky! only try me—do try me but once, that's all! Ten shillings is worth more to me now than a hundred pounds may be by-and-by."

"Ay, so you say *now;* but d'ye mean to tell me, that if I was now to advance you ten shillings out of my poor little salary," continued Huckaback apparently carelessly, "you'd, for instance, pay me a hundred pounds out of your thousands?"

"Only try me—do try me!" said Titmouse eagerly.

"Oh, I dare not say," interrupted Huckaback, smiling incredulously, and chinking some money in his trowsers' pocket. Titmouse heard it, and (as the phrase is) his teeth watered; and he immediately swore such a tremendous oath as I dare not set down in writing, that if Huckaback would that evening lend him ten shillings, Titmouse would give him one hundred pounds out of the very first moneys he got from the estate.

"Ten shillings is a slapping slice out of my little salary—I shall have, by George, to go without a many things I'd intended getting; it's worth ten pounds to me just now."

"Why, 'tis worth a hundred to *me!* Mrs. Squallop will sell me out, bag and baggage, if I don't give her something to-morrow."

"Well, if I really thought—would you mind giving me, now, a bit of black and white for it?"

"I'll do any thing you like; only let me feel the ten shillings in my fingers."

"Well, no sooner said than done, if you're a man of your word," said Huckaback, in a trice producing a bit of paper, and a pen and ink. "So, only just for the fun of it; but Lord! what stuff!—I'm only bargaining for a hundred pounds of moonshine. Ha, ha! I shall never see the colour of your money, not I; so I may as well say two hundred when I'm about it, as one hundred——"

"Why, hem! Two hundred, Huck, *is* rather a large figure; one hundred's odds enough, I'm sure."

"P'raps, Tit, you forget the licking you gave me the other day. Suppose I was to go to an attorney, and get the law of you, what a sight of damages I should have—three hundred pounds at least."

Titmouse appeared even yet hesitating.

"Well, then!" said Huckaback, flinging down his pen, "suppose I have them yet."

"Come, come, Hucky, 'tis all past and gone, all that."

"Is it? Well, I never! I shall never be again the same man I was before that licking. I've a sort of a—a—of a —feeling inside, as if my breast was—I shall carry it to my grave, —— if I sha'n't!"

It never once occurred to Titmouse, not having his friend Mr. Gammon at his elbow, that the plaintiff in the action of *Huckaback v. Titmouse* might have been slightly at a loss for a *witness* of the assault; but something quite as good in its way—a heaven-sent suggestion—*did* occur to him.

"Ah," said Titmouse suddenly, "that's true; and uncommon sorry am I; but still, a hundred pounds is a hundred pounds, and a large sum for the use of ten shillings and a licking; but never you think it's all moonshine about my business with Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap! You should only have heard what *I've* heard to-day from these gents; hem! but I won't split *again* either."

"Eh? What? Heard from those gents at Saffron Hill?" interrupted Huckaback briskly; "come, Titty, out with it —out with it; no secrets between friends, Titty."

"No, I'll be ——— if I do—I won't spoil it all again; and now, since I've let out as much, which I didn't mean to do, I'll tell you something else—ten shillings is no use to me, I must have a pound."

"Titty, Titty!" exclaimed Huckaback, with unaffected concern.

"And won't give more than fifty for it when I get my property either,"—Huckaback whistled aloud, and with a significant air buttoned up the pocket which contained the money; intimating that now the negotiation was all at an end, for that Titmouse's new terms were quite out of the question;—"for I know where I can get twenty pounds easily, only I liked to come to a *friend* first."

"You aren't behaving much like a friend to one as has always been a fast friend of yours, Titty! *A pound!*—I hav'n't got it to part with, that's flat; so, if that's your figure, why, you must even go to your other friend, and leave poor Hucky."

"Well, I don't mind saying only ten shillings," quoth Titmouse, fearing that he had been going on *rather* too fast.

"Ah, that's something reasonable-like, Titty! and, to meet you like a friend, I'll take fifty pounds instead of a hundred; but you won't object now to—you know—a deposite; that ring of yours. Well, well! it don't signify, since it goes against you: so now, here goes, a bit of paper for ten shillings, ha, ha!" and taking a pen, after a pause, in which he called to mind as much of the phraseology of money securities as he could, he drew up the following stringent document:

"Know all Men that you are bound to Mr. R. Huckaback Promising the bearer on Demand to Pay Fifty Pounds in cash out of the Estate, if you Get it.

"(Witness,) 22d July, 182–.

"R. HUCKABACK."

"There, Titty—if you're an honest man, and would do as you would be done by," said Huckaback, after signing his own name as above, handing the pen to Titmouse, "sign that; just to show your honour, like—for, in course, I shan't ever come on you for the money—get as much as you may."

A blessed thought occurred to poor Titmouse in his extremity, viz. that there was *no stamp* on the above instrument, (and he had never seen a promissory note or bill of exchange without one;) and he signed it instantly, with many fervent expressions of gratitude. Huckaback received the valuable security with apparently a careless air; and after cramming it into his pocket, as if it had been in reality only a bit of waste paper, counted out ten shillings into the eager hand of Titmouse; who, having thus most unexpectedly succeeded in his mission, soon afterwards departed—each of these pair of worthies fancying that he had succeeded in cheating the other. Huckaback having very cordially shaken Titmouse by the hand, heartily damned him upon shutting the door on him; and then anxiously perused and re-perused his "security," wondering whether it was possible for Titmouse at any time thereafter to evade it, and considering by what means he could acquaint himself with the progress of Titmouse's affairs. The latter gentleman, as he hurried homeward, dwelt for a long while upon only one thought—how fortunate was the omission of his friend to

have a stamp upon his security! When and where, thought he, was it that he had heard nothing would do without a stamp? However, he had got the ten shillings safe; and Huckaback might wait for his fifty pounds till —But in the meanwhile he, Titmouse, seemed to stand a fair chance of going to the dogs; the ten shillings, which he had obtained with so much difficulty, were to find their way immediately into the pockets of his landlady, whom it might pacify but for a day or two, and what quarter was he now to look to for the smallest assistance? What was to become of him? Titmouse was a miserable fool; but thoughts such as these, in such circumstances as his, would force themselves into the mind of even a fool! How could he avoid—oh, horrid thought!—soon parting with, or at least pawning, his ring and his other precious trinkets? He burst into a perspiration at the mere thought of seeing them hanging ticketed for sale in the window of old Balls! As he slowly ascended the stairs which led to his apartment, he felt as if he were following some unseen conductor to a dungeon.

He was not aware that all this while, although he heard nothing from them, he occupied almost exclusively the thoughts of those distinguished practitioners in the law, Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. They, in common with Huckaback, had an intense desire to share in his anticipated good fortune, and determined to do so according to their opportunities. The excellent Huckaback (a model of a usurer on a small scale) promptly and adroitly seized hold of the very first opportunity that presented itself, for securing a little return hereafter for the ten shillings, with which he had so generously parted when he could so ill afford it; while Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap were racking their brains, and, from time to time, those of Messrs. Mortmain and Frankpledge, to discover some instrument strong and large enough to cut a fat slice for themselves out of the fortune they were endeavouring, for that purpose, to put within the reach of Mr. Titmouse. A rule of three mode of stating the matter would be thus: as the inconvenience of Huckaback's parting with his ten shillings and his waiver of damages for a very cruel assault, were to his contingent gain, hereafter, of fifty pounds: so were Messrs. Quirk, Gam-

mon, and Snap's risk, exertions, outlay, and benefit conferred on Titmouse, to their contingent gain of ten thousand pounds. The principal point of difference between them was—as to the mode of *securing* their future recompense; in which it may have been observed by the attentive reader, with respect to the precipitancy of Huckaback, and hesitating caution of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, that—"*thus fools* (*e. g.* Huckaback) *rushed in where angels* (*i. e.* Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap) *feared to tread.*" Let me not, however, for a moment, insinuate that both these parties were actuated by only one motive, *i. e.* to make a prey of this little monkey *millionaire.* It is true that Huckaback appears to have driven rather a hard bargain with his distressed friend, (and almost every one that, being similarly situated, has occasion for such services as Titmouse sought from Huckaback, will find himself called upon to pay nearly the same price for them;) but it was attended with one good effect; for the specific interest in Titmouse's future prosperity, acquired by Huckaback, quickened his energies and sharpened his wits in the service of his friend. But for this, indeed, it is probable that Mr. Huckaback's door would have become as hopelessly closed against Titmouse as was that of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. Some two or three nights after the little transaction between the two friends which I have been describing, Huckaback called upon Titmouse, and after greeting him rather cordially, told him that he had come to put him up to a trick upon the Saffron Hill people, that would tickle them into a little activity in his affairs. The trick was—the sending a letter to those gentlemen calculated to—but why attempt to characterize it? I have the original document lying before me, which was sent by Titmouse the very next morning to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, and here follows a *verbatim* copy of it:

"No. 9, Closet Court, Oxford Street.

"To Messrs. Quirk & Co.

"Gents.—Am Sorry to Trouble You, But Being *Drove quite desperate* at my Troubles (which have brot me to my Last Penny a Week ago) and Mrs. Squallop my Land-

lady wd distrain on Me only that There Is nothing To distrain on, Am Determined to Go Abroad in a Week's Time, and shall Never come Any More back again with Great Grief wh Is What I now Write To tell You Of (Hoping you Will please Take No notice of It) So Need give Yourselves No Further Concern with my Concerns Seeing The Estate is Not To Be Had and Am Sorry You Shd Have Had so Much trouble With My Affairs wh cd not Help. Shd have Much liked The Thing, only it Was Not worth Stopping For, or Would, but Since It Was not God's Will be Done *which it will.* Havg raised a Trifle On my Future Prospects (wh am Certain There is Nothing In) from a *True Friend*"—Need it be guessed at whose instance these words found their way into the letter?—" wh was certainly uncommon inconvenient to That Person But He wd do Anything to Do me good As he says Am going to raise A Little More from a Gent That does *Things of That Nature* wh will help me with Expense in Going Abroad (which place I never mean to Return from). Have fixed for the 10th To Go on wh Day Shall Take leave Of Mr. Tagrag (who on my Return Shall be glad to See Buried or in the Workhouse). Have wrote This letter Only to Save trouble wh Trust You wd not have taken.

" And Remain,
" Gents,
" Yr humble Unworthy Servt.
T. Titmouse."

" *P. S*—Hope you will particularly Remember me to Mr. Gammon. What is to become of me, know nothing, being so troubled. Am Humbly determined not to employ any Gents in This matter except your most Respectable House, and shd be most Truly sorry to Go Abroad *wh am really Often thinking of in Earnest.* (Unless something Speedily Turns Up, favourable,) T. T.—Shd like (By the way) to know if you shd be so Disposed what yr recpe house wd take for my Chances Down (*Out and out*) In a Round Sum (*Ready Money*) And hope if they Write It will be by Next Post or shall be gone Abroad."

Old Quirk, as soon as he had finished the perusal of

this skilful document, started, a little disturbed, from his seat, and bustled into Mr. Gammon's room, with Mr. Titmouse's open letter in his hand.—"Gammon," said he, "just cast your eye over this, will you? Really, we must look after Titmouse, or he'll be gone!" Mr. Gammon took the letter rather eagerly, read deliberately through it, and then looked up at his fidgety partner, who stood anxiously eyeing him, and smiled.

"Well, Gammon, I really think—eh? Don't you?"

"Upon my word, Mr. Quirk, this nearly equals his former letter; and it also seems to have produced on you the desired effect."

"Well, Gammon, and what of that? Because my heart don't happen to be *quite* a piece of flint, you're always—"

"You might have been a far wealthier man than you are, but for that soft heart of yours, Mr. Quirk," said Gammon, with a bland smile.

"I know I might, Gammon—I know it. I thank my God I'm not so keen after business that I can't feel for this poor soul—really, his state's quite deplorable!"

"Then, my dear sir, put your hand into your pocket at once, as I was suggesting last night, and allow him a weekly sum."

"A—hem! hem! Gammon"—said Quirk, sitting down, thrusting his hands into his waistcoat pockets, and looking very earnestly at Gammon.

"Well, then"—that gentleman shrugging his shoulders in answer to the mute appeal—"write and say you *won't* —'tis soon done, and so the matter ends."

"Why, Gammon, you see, if he goes abroad," said Quirk, after a long pause—"we lose him for ever."

"Pho!—go abroad? He's too much for you, Mr. Quirk—he is, indeed, ha, ha!"

"You're fond of a laugh at my expense, Gammon; it's quite pleasant—you can't think how I like it!"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Quirk—but you really misunderstood me; I was laughing only at the absurd inconsistency of the fellow: he's a most transparent fool, and takes *us* for such. Go abroad! Ridiculous pretence!—In his precious postscript he undoes all—he says he is only often *thinking* of going—pshaw!—That the wretch is in great distress, is very probable—but it must go hard with

him before he either commits suicide or goes abroad, I warrant him; I've no fears on *that* score—but there *is* a point in the letter that may be worth considering—I mean the fellow's hint about borrowing money on his prospects."

"Yes, to be sure—the very thing that struck *me*."—Gammon faintly smiled.—"I never thought much about the *other* part of the letter—all stuff about going abroad—pho!—But, to be sure, if he's trying to raise money, he may get into keen hands—Do you really think he *has?*"

"Oh no—of course its only a little lie of his—or he must have found out some greater fool than himself, which I had not supposed possible. But however that may be, I really think, Mr. Quirk, its high time that we should take some decided steps."

"Well,—yes, it may be," said Quirk, slowly—"and I must say that Mortmain encouraged me a good deal the day before yesterday."

"Well, and you know what Mr. Frankpledge——"

"Oh, as to Frankpledge—hem!"

"What of Mr. Frankpledge, Mr. Quirk?" inquired Gammon, rather tartly.

"There! There!—Always the way—but what does it signify?—Come, come, Gammon, we know each other too well to quarrel!—I don't mean any thing disrespectful to Mr. Frankpledge, but when Mortmain has been one's conveyancer these thirty-three years, and never once—hem!—but, however, he tells me that we are standing on sure ground, or that he don't know what sure ground is, and sees no objection to our even taking preliminary steps in the matter, which indeed I begin to think it high time to do!—And as for securing ourselves in respect of any advances to Titmouse—he suggests our taking a bond, conditioned—say, for the payment of £500 or £1000 on demand, under cover of which one might advance him, you know, just such sums as and when we pleased; one could stop when one thought fit, one could begin with three or four pounds a-week, and increase as his prospects improved—eh!"

"You know *I've* no objection to such an arrangement; but consider, Mr. Quirk, we must have patience; it will take a long while to get our verdict, you know, and perhaps as long to *secure* it afterwards; and this horrid little

wretch all the while on our hands; what the deuce to do with him, I really don't know!"

"Humph, humph!" grunted Quirk, looking very earnestly and uneasily at Gammon.

"And what I chiefly fear is this,—suppose he should get dissatisfied with the amount of our advances, and, knowing the state and prospects of the cause, should turn restive?"

"Ay, confound it, Gammon, all that should be looked to, shouldn't it?" interrupted Quirk, with an exceedingly chagrined air.

"To be sure," continued Gammon, thoughtfully; "by that time he may have got substantial friends about him, whom he could persuade to become security to us for further and past advances."

"Nay, now you name the thing, Gammon; it was what I was thinking of only the other day;" he dropped his voice—"isn't there one or two of our own clients? hem!"

"Why, certainly, there's old Fang; I don't think it impossible he might be induced to do a little usury—it's all he lives for, Mr. Quirk; and the security is good in reality, though perhaps not exactly marketable."

"Nay; but on second thoughts, why not do it ourselves, if any thing *can* be made of it?"

"That, however, will be for future consideration. In the mean time, we'd better send for Titmouse, and manage him a little more — discreetly, eh? We did not exactly hit it off last time, did we, Mr. Quirk?" said Gammon, smiling rather sarcastically. "We must keep him at Tagrag's, if the thing *can* be done, for the present, at all events."

"To be sure; he couldn't then come buzzing about us, like a gad-fly; he'd drive us mad in a week, I'm sure."

"Oh, I'd rather give up every thing than submit to it. It can't be difficult for us, I should think, to bind him to our own terms—to put a bridle in the ass's mouth? Let us say that we insist on his signing an undertaking to act implicitly according to our directions in every thing."

"Ay, to be sure; on pain of our instantly turning him to the right-about. I fancy it will do, now!"

"And, now, Mr. Quirk," said Gammon, with as much

of peremptoriness in his tone as he could venture upon to Mr. Quirk, "you really must do me the favour to leave the management of this little wretch to me. You see, he seems to have taken—Heaven save the mark!—a fancy to me, poor fellow!—and—and—it must be owned, we miscarried sadly, the other night, on a certain grand occasion—eh?"

Quirk shook his head dissentingly.

"Well, then," continued Gammon, "one thing I am determined on: one or the other of us, Mr. Quirk, shall undertake Titmouse, solely and singly. Pray, for Heaven's sake, tackle him yourself—a disagreeable duty! You know, my dear sir, how invariably I leave every thing of real importance and difficulty to your very superior tact and experience."

"Come, come, Gammon, that's a drop of sweet oil."

Quirk might well say so, for he felt its softening, smoothing effects already.

"Upon my word and honour, Mr. Quirk, I'm in earnest. Pshaw!—and you must know it. I know you too well, my dear sir, to attempt to—"

"Certainly, I must say, those must get up *very* early that can find Caleb Quirk napping,"—Gammon felt at that moment that for several years *he* must have been a very early riser. And so the matter was arranged in the manner which Gammon had wished and determined upon, —*i. e.* that Mr. Titmouse should be left entirely to his management; and, after some little discussion as to the time and manner of the meditated advances, the partners parted. On entering his own room, Quirk closing his door, stood leaning against the side of the window, with his hands in his pockets, and his eyes instinctively resting on his banker's book, which lay on the table. He was in a very brown study; the subject on which his thoughts were busied being the prudence or imprudence of leaving Titmouse thus in the hands of Gammon. It might be all very well for Quirk to *assert* his self-confidence when in Gammon's presence, but he did not really feel it. He never left Gammon after any little difference of opinion, however friendly, without a secret suspicion that somehow or another Gammon had been too much for him, and always gained his purpose, without giving Quirk any

handle of dissatisfaction. In fact, Quirk was thoroughly afraid of Gammon, and Gammon knew it. In the present instance, an undefinable but increasing suspicion and dissatisfaction forced him presently back again into Gammon's room.

"I say, Gammon, you understand, eh?—*Fair play*, you know," he commenced, with a sly embarrassed air, ill concealed under a forced smile.

"Pray, Mr. Quirk, what may be your meaning?" inquired Gammon, with unusual tartness, with an astonished air, and blushing violently, which was not surprising; for ever since Quirk had quitted him, Gammon's thoughts had been occupied with only one question, viz: how he should go to work with Titmouse to satisfy him that he (Gammon) was the only member of the firm that had a real disinterested regard for him, and so acquire a valuable control over him. Thus occupied, the observation of Quirk had completely taken Gammon aback; and he lost his presence of mind, of course his temper quickly following. "Will you favour me, Mr. Quirk, with an explanation of your extraordinarily absurd and offensive observation?" said he, reddening more and more as he looked at Mr. Quirk.

"You're a queer hand, Gammon," replied Quirk, with almost an equally surprised and embarrassed air, for he could not resist a sort of conviction that Gammon had fathomed what had been passing in his mind.

"What did you mean, Mr. Quirk, by your singular observation just now?" said Gammon calmly, having recovered his presence of mind.

"Mean? Why, that—we're *both* queer hands, Gammon, ha, ha, ha!" answered Quirk with an anxious laugh.

"I shall leave Titmouse entirely—*entirely*, Mr. Quirk, in your hands; I will have nothing whatever to do with him. I am quite sick of him and his affairs already; I cannot bring myself to undertake such an affair, and that was what I was thinking of, when—"

"Eh? indeed! Well, to be sure! Only think!" said Quirk, dropping his voice, looking to see that the two doors were shut, and resuming the chair which he had lately quitted, "What do you think has been occurring to *me* in my own room, just now? Whether it would suit

us better to throw this monkey overboard, put ourselves confidentially in communication with the party in possession, and tell him that—hem! hem!—for a—eh? You understand? a con-si-de-ra-tion—a *suitable* con-si-de-ration."

"Mr. Quirk! Heavens!" Gammon was really amazed.

"Well? You needn't open your eyes so very wide, Mr. Gammon—why shouldn't it be done? You know we shouldn't be satisfied with a trifle, of course. But suppose he'd agree to buy our silence with four or five thousand pounds, really, it's well worth considering! Upon my soul, Gammon, it *is* a hard thing on him; no fault of his, and it is very hard for him to turn out, and for such a—eugh!—such a wretch as Titmouse! you'd feel it yourself, Gammon, if you were in his place, and I'm sure that you'd think that four or five thou—"

"But is not Titmouse our *poor neighbour?*" said Gammon, with a sly smile.

"Why, that's only one way of looking at it, Gammon! Perhaps the man we are going to eject does a vast deal of good with the property; certainly he bears a very high name in the county—and fancy Titmouse with ten thousand a-year!"

"Mr. Quirk, Mr. Quirk, it's not to be thought of for a moment—not for a moment," interrupted Gammon, seriously, and even somewhat peremptorily—"nothing should persuade *me* to be any party to such—"

At this moment Snap burst into the room with a heated appearance, and a chagrined air—

"*Pitch* v. *Grub.*"

This was a little pet action of poor Snap's: it was for slander uttered by the defendant, a green-grocer, against the plaintiff, charging the plaintiff with having the mange, on account of which a lady refused to marry him.

"Pitch *v.* Grub, just been tried at Guildhall. Witness bang up to the mark—words and damages proved; slapping speech from Serjeant Shout.—Verdict for plaintiff, one farthing; and Lord Lumpington said, as the jury had given plaintiff one farthing for damages, *he* would give him another for costs,* and that would make a halfpenny;

* I suppose myself to be alluding here to a very oppressive statute, passed to clip the wings of such gentlemen as Mr. Snap, by which

on which the defendant's attorney tendered me—a half-penny on the spot. Laughter in court—move for new trial first day of next term, and tip his lordship a rattler in the next Sunday's *Flash*."

"Mr. Quirk, once for all, if these kind of actions are to go on, I'll leave the firm, come what will." It flickered across his mind that Titmouse would be a capital client to start with on his own account. "I protest our names will quite stink in the profession."

"Good, Mr. Gammon, good!" interrupted Snap, warmly; "your little action for the usury penalties the other day came off so uncommon well!"

"Let me tell you, Mr. Snap," interrupted Gammon, reddening—

"Pho! Come! Can't be helped—fortune of the war,"—interrupted the head of the firm.—"*Is Pitch solvent?*—Of course we've security for costs out of pocket."

Now, the fact was, that poor Snap had picked up Pitch at one of the police offices, and, in his zeal for business, had undertaken his case on pure speculation, relying on the apparent strength of the plaintiff's case—Pitch being only a waterman attached to a coach-stand. When, therefore, the very ominous question of Mr. Quirk met Snap's ear, he suddenly happened (at least he thought so) to hear himself called from the clerk's room, and bolted out of Mr. Gammon's room rather unceremoniously.

"Snap will be the ruin of the firm, Mr. Quirk," said Gammon, with an air of disgust. "But I really must get on with the brief I'm drawing; so, Mr. Quirk, we can talk about Mr. Titmouse to-morrow?"

The brief he was drawing up was for a defendant who was going to nonsuit the plaintiff, (a man with a large family, who had kindly lent the defendant a considerable sum of money,) solely because of the *want of a stamp*.

Quirk differed in opinion with Gammon, and, as he resumed his seat at his desk, he could not help writing

it is enacted that, in actions for slander, if the jury find a verdict under forty shillings, *e. g.*, as in the case in the text, for one farthing, the plaintiff shall be entitled to recover from the defendant only as much costs as damages, *i. e.*, another farthing; a provision which has made many a poor pettifogger sneak out of court with a flea in his ear.

the words, "*Quirk and Snap*," and thinking how well such a firm would sound and work—for Snap was verily a chip of the old block!

There will probably never be wanting those who will join in abusing and ridiculing attorneys and solicitors. Why? In almost every action at law, or suit in equity, or proceeding which may, or may not, lead to one, each client conceives a natural dislike for his opponent's attorney or solicitor. *If the plaintiff succeeds,* he hates the defendant's attorney for putting him (the said plaintiff) to so much expense, and causing him so much vexation and danger, and, when he comes to settle with his own attorney, there is not a little heart-burning in looking at his bill of costs, however reasonable. *If the plaintiff fails,* of course it is through the ignorance and unskilfulness of his attorney or solicitor; and he hates almost equally his own and his opponent's attorney. Precisely so is it with a successful or unsuccessful *defendant.* In fact, an attorney or solicitor is almost always obliged to be acting *adversely to some one* of whom he at once makes an enemy, for an attorney's weapons must necessarily be pointed almost invariably at our pockets! He is necessarily, also, called into action in cases when all the worst passions of our nature—our hatred and revenge, and our self-interest—are set in motion. Consider the mischief that might be constantly done on a grand scale in society, if the vast majority of attorneys and solicitors were not honourable and able men! Conceive them, for a moment, disposed every where to stir up litigation, by availing themselves of their perfect acquaintance with almost all men's circumstances—artfully inflaming irritable and vindictive clients, kindling, instead of stifling, family dissentions, and fomenting public strife—why, were they to do only a hundredth part of what it is thus in their power to do, our courts of justice would soon be doubled, together with the number of our judges, counsel, and attorneys.

But not all this body of honourable and valuable men are entitled to this tribute of praise. There are a few Quirks, several Gammons, and many Snaps, in the profession of the law—men whose character and doings often make fools visit the sins of individuals upon the whole

species; nay, there are far worse, as I have heard—but I must return to my narrative.

On Friday night, the 28th of July, 182–, the state of Mr. Titmouse's affairs was this: he owed his landlady £1 9s.; his washerwoman, 6s.; his tailor, £1 8s.—in all, three guineas; besides 10s. to Huckaback, (for Tittlebat's notion was, that on repayment at any time of 10s., Huckaback would be bound to deliver up to him the document or voucher which he had given him,) and a weekly accruing rent of 7s. to his landlady, besides some very small sums for washing, tea, bread and butter, &c. To meet these serious liabilities, he had—*not one farthing*.

On returning to his lodgings that night, he found a line from Thumbscrew, his landlady's broker, informing him that, unless by ten o'clock on the next morning his arrears of rent were paid, he should distrain, and she would also give him notice to quit at the end of the week; that nothing could induce her to give him further time. He sat down in dismay on reading this threatening document; and, in sitting down, his eye fell on a bit of paper lying on the floor, which must have been thrust under the door. From the marks on it, it was evident that he must have trod upon it in entering. It proved to be a summons from the Court of Requests, for £1 8s., due to Job Cox, his tailor. He deposited it mechanically on the table; and for a minute he dared hardly breathe.

This seemed something really like a *crisis*.

After a silent agony of half an hour's duration, he rose trembling from his chair, blew out his candle, and, in a few minutes' time, might have been seen standing with a pale and troubled face before the window of old Balls, the pawnbroker, peering through the suspended articles —watches, sugar-tongs, rings, brooches, spoons, pins, bracelets, knives and forks, seals, chains, &c.—to see whether any one else than old Balls were within. Having at length watched out a very pale and wretched-looking woman, Titmouse entered to take her place; and after interchanging a few words with the white-haired and hard-hearted old pawnbroker, produced his guard-chain, his breast-pin, and his ring, and obtained three pounds two shillings and sixpence, on the security of them. With this sum he slunk out of the shop, and calling on Cox,

his tailor, paid his trembling old creditor the full amount of his claim (£1 8s.) together with 4s., the expense of the summons—simply asking for a receipt, without utterng another word, for he felt almost choked.

In the same way he dealt with Mrs. Squallop, his landlady—not uttering one word in reply to her profuse and voluble apologies, but pressing his lips between his teeth till the blood came from them, while his heart seemed bursting within him. Then he walked up stairs, with a desperate air—with eighteenpence in his pocket—*all his ornaments gone*—his washerwoman yet unpaid—his rent going on—several other little matters unsettled; and the 10th of August approaching, when he expected to be dismissed penniless from Mr. Tagrag's, and thrown on his own resources for subsistence. When he had regained his room, and, having shut the door, had re-seated himself at his table, he felt for a moment as if he could have yelled. Starvation and Despair, two fiends, seemed sitting beside him in shadowy ghastliness, chilling and palsying him—petrifying his heart within him. *What was he to do?* Why had he been born? Why was he so much more persecuted and miserable than any one else? Visions of his ring, his breast-pin, his studs, stuck in a bit of card, with their price written above them, and hanging exposed to his view in old Ball's window, almost frenzied him. Thoughts such as those at length began to suggest others of a dreadful nature. . . . . The means were at that instant within his reach. . . . . A sharp knock at the door startled him out of the stupor into which he was sinking. He listened for a moment, as if he were not certain that the sound was a real one. There seemed a ton weight upon his heart, which a mighty sigh could lift for an instant, but not remove; and he was in the act of heaving a second such sigh, as he languidly opened the door—expecting to encounter Mr. Thumbscrew, or some of his myrmidons, who might not know of his recent settlement with his landlady.

"Is this Mr.—Tit—Titmouse's?" inquired a genteel looking young man.

"Yes," replied Titmouse, sadly.

"Are you Mr. Titmouse?"

"Yes," he replied, more faintly than before.

"Oh—I have brought you, sir, a letter from Mr. Gammon, of the firm of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, solicitors, Saffron Hill," said the stranger, unconscious that his words shot a flash of light into a little abyss of sorrow before him. "He begged me to give this letter into your own hands, and said he hoped you'd send him an answer by the first morning's post."

"Yes—oh—I see—certainly—to be sure—with pleasure—how is Mr. Gammon?—uncommon kind of him—very humble respects to him—take care to answer it"—stammered Titmouse, in a breath, hardly knowing whether he was standing on his head or his heels, and not quite certain where he was.

"Good evening, sir," replied the stranger, evidently a little surprised at Titmouse's manner, and withdrew. Titmouse shut his door. With prodigious trepidation of hand and flutter of spirits, he opened the letter—an enclosure meeting his eyes in the shape of a bank note.

"Oh Lord!" he murmured, turning white as the sheet of paper he held. Then the letter dropped from his hand, and he stood as if stupified for some moments; but presently rapture darted through him; a five-pound banknote was in his hand, and it had been enclosed in the following letter:

"35, Thavie's Inn, 29th July, 182–.

"My dear Mr. Titmouse,

"Your last note, addressed to our firm, has given me the greatest pain, and I hasten, on my return from the country, to forward you the enclosed trifle, which I sincerely hope will be of temporary service to you. May I beg the favour of your company on Sunday evening next, at seven o'clock, to take a glass of wine with me? I shall be quite alone and disengaged; and may have it in my power to make you some important communications concerning matters in which, I assure you, I feel a very deep interest on your account. Begging the favour of an early answer to-morrow morning, I trust you will believe me, ever, my dear sir, your most faithful humble servant,

"Oily Gammon.

"Tittlebat Titmouse, Esq."

The first balmly drop of the long-expected golden shower had at length fallen upon the panting Titmouse. How polite—nay, how affectionate and respectful—was the note of Mr. Gammon! and, for the first time in his life, he saw himself addressed "Tittlebat Titmouse, Esquire." If his room had been large enough to admit of it, Titmouse would have skipped round it again and again in his frantic ecstacy. Having at length read over and over again the blessed letter of Mr. Gammon, he hastily folded it up, crumpled up the bank note in his hand, clapped his hat on his head, blew out his candle, rushed down stairs as if a mad dog were at his heels, and in three or four minutes' time was standing breathless before old Balls, whom he almost electrified by asking, with an eager and joyous air, for a return of the articles which he had only an hour before pawned with him; at the same time laying down the duplicates and the bank note. The latter old Balls scrutinized with the most anxious exactness, and even suspicion—but it seemed perfectly unexceptionable; so he gave him back his precious ornaments, and the change out of his note, *minus* a trifling sum for interest. Titmouse then started off at top-speed to Huckaback; but it suddenly occurring to him as possible that that gentleman, on hearing of his good fortune, might look for an immediate repayment of the ten shillings he had recently lent to Titmouse, he stopped short—paused—and returned home. There he had hardly been seated a moment, when down he pelted again, to buy a sheet of paper and a wafer or two, to write his letter to Mr. Gammon; which having obtained, he returned at the same speed, almost overturning his fat landlady, who looked after him as if he were a mad cat scampering up and down stairs, and fearing that he had gone suddenly crazy. The note he wrote to Mr. Gammon was so exceedingly extravagant, that, candid as I have, I trust, hitherto shown myself in the delineation of Mr. Titmouse's character, I cannot bring myself to give the said letter to the reader—making all allowances for the extraordinary excitement of its writer.

Sleep that night and morning found and left Mr. Titmouse the assured exulting master of TEN THOUSAND A-YEAR. Of this fact, the oftener he read Mr. Gammon's

letter, the stronger became his convictions. 'Twas undoubtedly rather a large inference from small premises; but it secured him unspeakable happiness, *for a time*, at a possible cost of future disappointment and misery, which he did not pause to consider. The fact is, that logic, (according to Dr. Watts, *the right use of reason*) is not a practical art. No one regards it in actual life. Observe, therefore, folks on all hands constantly acting like Tittlebat Titmouse in the case before us. His *conclusion* was—that he had become the certain master of ten thousand a-year; his *premises* were what the reader has seen. I do not, however, mean to say, that if the reader be a youth hot from the University, he may not be able to prove, by a very refined and ingenious argument, that Titmouse was, in what he did above, a fine natural logician; for I recollect that Aristotle hath demonstrated, by a famous argument, that the moon is made of green cheese; and no one that I have heard of, hath ever been able to prove the contrary.

By six o'clock the next morning, Titmouse had, with his own hand, dropped his answer into the letter-box upon the door of Mr. Gammon's chamber in Thavies' Inn; in which answer he had, with numerous expressions of profound respect and gratitade, accepted Mr. Gammon's polite invitation. A very happy man felt he, as he returned to Oxford Street; entering Messrs. Dowlas's premises with alacrity, just as they were being opened, and volunteering his assistance in numerous things beyond his usual province, with singular briskness and energy; as if conscious that by doing so he was greatly gratifying Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, whose wishes upon the subject he knew. He displayed such unwonted cheerfulness and patient good-nature throughout the day, that one of his companions, a serious youth, in a white neckerchief, black clothes, and with a sanctified countenance—the only professing pious person in the establishment—took an occasion to ask him, in a mysterious whisper, "whether he had not got *converted*;" and whether he would, at six o'clock in the morning, accompany the speaker to a room in the neighbourhood, where he (the youth aforesaid) was going to conduct an exhortation and prayer meeting!

Titmouse refused—but not without a few qualms; for luck certainly seemed to be smiling on him, and he felt that he ought to be grateful for it; but then, he at length reflected, the proper place for that sort of thing would be a regular church—to which he resolved to go. This change of manners Tagrag, however, looked upon as assumed only to affront *him;* seeing nothing but impertinence and defiance in all that Titmouse did—as if the nearer Titmouse got to the end of his bondage—*i. e.* the 10th of August—the lighter-hearted he grew. He resolved religiously to keep his counsel; to avoid even—at all events for the present—communicating with Huckaback.

On the ensuing Sunday, he rose at an earlier hour than usual, and took nearly twice as long a time to dress—often falling into many delightful reveries. By eleven o'clock he might be seen entering the gallery of St. Andrew's Church, Holborn; where he considered that doubtless Mr. Gammon, who lived in the neighbourhood, might attend. He asked three or four pew-openers, both below and above, if they knew which was Mr. Gammon's pew—Mr. Gammon of Thavies' Inn; not dreaming of presumptuously going to the pew, but of sitting in some place that commanded a view of it. Mr. Gammon, I need hardly say, was quite unknown there—no one had ever heard of such a person: nevertheless Titmouse, albeit a little galled at being, in spite of his elegant appearance, slipped into a back pew, remained—but his thoughts wandered grievously the whole time; on then he sauntered in the direction of Hyde Park, to which he seemed now to have a sort of *claim.* How soon might he become, instead of a mere spectator as heretofore, a partaker in its glories! The dawn of the day of fortune was on his long-benighted soul; and he could hardly subdue his excited feelings. Punctual to his appointment, as the clock struck seven, he made his appearance at Mr. Gammon's with a pair of span new white kid gloves on, and was speedily ushered, a little flurried, by a comfortable-looking elderly female servant, into Mr. Gammon's room. He was dressed just as when he was first presented to the reader, sallying forth into Oxford Street, to enslave the lady-world. Mr. Gammon, who was sitting reading the *Sunday Flash* at a

table on which stood a couple of decanters, several wine-glasses, and two or three dishes of fruit, rose and received his distinguished visiter with the most delightful affability.

"I am most happy, Mr. Titmouse, to see you in this friendly way," said he, shaking him by the hand.

"Oh, don't name it, sir," quoth Titmouse, rather indistinctly, and hastily running his hand through his hair.

"I've nothing, you see, to offer you but a little fruit, and a glass of fair port or sherry."

"Particular fond of them, sir," replied Titmouse, endeavouring to clear his throat; for in spite of a strong effort to appear at his ease, he was unsuccessful; so that when Gammon's keen eye glanced at the bedizened figure of his guest, a bitter smile passed over his face, without having been observed. "*This*," thought he, as his eye passed from the ring glittering on the little finger of the right hand, to the studs and breast-pin in the shirt front, and thence to the guard-chain glaring entirely outside a damson-coloured satin waistcoat, and the spotless white glove which yet glistened on the left hand—"This is the writer of the dismal epistle of the other day, announcing his desperation and destitution!"

"Your health, Mr. Titmouse!—help yourself!" said Mr. Gammon, in a cheerful and cordial tone; Titmouse pouring out a glass only three-quarters full, raised it to his lips with a slightly tremulous hand, and returned Mr. Gammon's salutation. When had Titmouse tasted a glass of wine before?—a reflection occurring not only to himself, but also to Gammon, to whom it was a circumstance that might be serviceable.

"You see, Mr. Titmouse, mine's only a small bachelor's establishment, and I cannot put my old servant out of the way by having my friends to dinner"—quite forgetting that the day before he had entertained at least six friends, including Mr. Frankpledge—but the idea of going through a dinner *with Mr. Titmouse!*

And now, O inexperienced Titmouse! unacquainted with the potent qualities of wine, I warn you to be cautious how you drink many glasses, for you cannot calculate the effect which they will have upon you; and, indeed, methinks that with this man you have a game to

play which will not admit of much wine being drank. Be you, therefore, on your guard; for wine is like a strong serpent, who will creep unperceived into your empty head, and coil himself up therein, until at length he moves about—and all things are as nought to you!

"Oh, sir, 'pon my honour, beg you won't name it—all one to me, sir!—Beautiful wine this, sir."

"Pretty fair, I think—certainly rather old;—but what fruit will you take—currants or cherries?"

"Why—a—I've so lately dined," replied Titmouse, alluding to an exceedingly slight repast at a coffee-shop about two o'clock. He would have preferred the cherries, but did not feel quite at his ease how to dispose of the stones nicely—gracefully—so he took a very few red currants upon his plate, and eat them slowly, and with a modest air.

"Well, Mr. Titmouse," commenced Gammon, with an air of concern, "I was really much distressed by your last letter."

"Uncommon glad to hear it, sir—knew you would, sir—you're so kind-hearted;—all quite true, sir!"

"I had no idea that you were reduced to such straits," said Gammon, in a sympathizing tone, but settling his eye involuntarily on the ring of Titmouse.

"Quite dreadful, sir—'pon my soul, dreadful; and such usage at Mr. Tagrag's!"

"But you mustn't think of going abroad—away from all your friends, Mr. Titmouse."

"*Abroad*, sir!" interrupted Titmouse, with anxious but subdued eagerness; "never thought of such a thing!"

"Oh! I—I thought——"

"There isn't a word of truth in it, sir; and if you've heard so, it must have been from that audacious fellow that called on you—he's *such* a liar—if you knew him as well as I do, sir?" said Titmouse, with a confident air, quite losing sight of his letter to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap—"No, sir—shall stay, and stick to friends that stick to me."

"Take another glass of wine, Mr. Titmouse," interrupted Gammon, cordially, and Mr. Titmouse obeyed him; but while he was pouring it out, a sudden recollection of his letter flashing across his mind, satisfied him

that he stood detected in a flat lie before Mr. Gammon, and he blushed scarlet.

"Do you like the sherry?" inquired Gammon, perfectly aware of what was passing through the mind of his guest, and wishing to divert his thoughts. Titmouse answered in the affirmative: and proceeded to pour forth such a number of apologies for his own behaviour at Saffron Hill, and that of Huckaback on the subsequent occasion, as Gammon found it difficult to stop, over and over again assuring him that all had been forgiven and forgotten. When Titmouse came to the remittance of the five pounds,

"Don't mention it, my dear sir," interrupted Gammon, very blandly; "it gave me, I assure you, far greater satisfaction to send it, than you to receive it. I hope it has a little relieved you?"

"I think so, sir! I was, 'pon my life, on my very last legs."

"When things come to the worst, they often mend, Mr. Titmouse! I told Mr. Quirk (who, to do him justice, came at last into my views) that, however premature, and perhaps imprudent it might be in us to go so far, I could not help relieving your present necessities, even out of my own resources."

Oh, Gammon, Gammon!

"How uncommon kind of you, sir!" exclaimed Titmouse.

"Not in the least, my dear sir. Pray fill another glass, Mr. Titmouse! You see Mr. Quirk is quite a man of business—and our profession too often affords instances of persons whose hearts contract as their purses expand, Mr. Titmouse—ha, ha! Indeed, those who make their money as hard as Mr. Quirk (who, between ourselves, dare not look at a gallows, or the hulks, or a map of Botany Bay, or the tread-mill, or the stocks, or fifty prisoners in the face, for the wrong he has done them) are apt to be slow at parting with it, and *very* suspicious."

"Well, I hope no offence, sir; but really I thought as much, directly I saw that old gent."

"Ah—but *now* he is embarked, heart and soul, in the affair."

"No! *Is* he really, sir?" inquired Titmouse, eagerly.

"That is," replied Gammon, quickly, "so long as I am at his elbow, urging him on—for he wants some one, who —hem! In fact, my dear sir, ever since I had the good fortune to make the discovery, which happily brought us acquainted with each other, Mr. Titmouse"—It was old Quirk who had made the discovery, and Gammon who had from the first thrown cold water on it—"I have been doing all I could with him, and I trust I may say, have at last licked the thing into shape."

"I'll take my oath, sir," said Titmouse, excitedly, "I never was so much struck with any one in all my born days as I was with you, sir, when you first came to my emp—to Mr. Tagrag's sir—Lord, sir, how uncommon sharp you seemed!" Gammon smiled with a deprecating air, and sipped his wine in silence; but there was great sweetness in the expression of his countenance. Poor Titmouse's doubts, hopes, and fears, were rapidly subliming into a *reverence* for Gammon! * * *

"I certainly quite agree with Mr. Quirk, that the difficulties in our way are of the most serious description. To speak, for an instant only, of the risk we ourselves incur personally—would you believe it, my dear Mr. Titmouse, in such a disgraceful state are our laws, that we can't gratify our feelings by taking up your cause, without rendering ourselves liable to imprisonment for Heaven knows how long, and a fine that would be ruin itself, if we should be found out!"

Titmouse continued silent, his wineglass in his hand arrested in its way to his mouth; which, together with his eyes, were opened to their widest extent, as he stared with a kind of horror upon Mr. Gammon. "*Are* we, then, unreasonable, my dear sir, in entreating you to be cautious—nay, in insisting on your compliance with our wishes, in all that we shall deem prudent and necessary, when not only your own best interests, but our characters, liberties, and fortunes are staked on the issue of this great enterprise? I am sure," continued Gammon, with great emotion, "you will feel for us, Mr. Titmouse. I see you do!" Gammon put his hand over his eyes, in order, apparently, to conceal his emotion, and also to observe what effect he had produced upon Titmouse.

The conjoint influence of Gammon's wine and eloquence not a little agitated Titmouse, in whose eyes stood tears.

"I'll do any thing—any thing, sir," he almost sobbed.

"Oh! all we wish is to be allowed to serve you effectually; and to enable us to do that——"

"Tell me to be hid in a coal-hole, and see if I won't do it."

"What! a coal-hole?—Would you, then, even stop at Dowlas, Tagrag and Co.'s?"

"Ye-e-e-e-s, sir—hem! hem! That is, till the *tenth* of next month, when my time's up."

"Ah!—ay!—oh, I understand! Another glass, Mr. Titmouse, said Gammon, pouring himself out some more wine; and observing, while Titmouse followed his example, that there was an unsteadiness in his motions of a very different description from that which he had exhibited at the commencement of the evening—at the same time wondering what the deuce they should do with him after the *tenth*.

"You see, *I* have the utmost confidence in you, and had so from the first happy moment when we met; but Mr. Quirk is rather sus——In short, to prevent misunderstanding (as he says), Mr. Quirk is anxious that you should give a *written* promise." (Titmouse looked eagerly about for writing materials.) "No, not now, but in a day or two's time. I confess, my dear Mr. Titmouse, if *I* might have decided on the matter, I should have been satisfied with your verbal promise; but, I must say, Mr. Quirk's gray hairs seem to have made him quite—eh? you understand? Don't you think so, Mr. Titmouse?"

"To be sure! 'pon my honour, Mr. Gammon!" replied Titmouse, not very distinctly understanding, however, what he was so energetically assenting to.

"I dare say you wonder why we wish you to stop a few months longer at your present hiding-place—at Dowlas's?"

"Can't, after the tenth of next month, sir."

"But as soon as we begin to fire off our guns against the enemy—Lord, my dear sir, if they could only find out, you know, where to get at you—you would never live to enjoy your ten thousand a-year! They'd either

poison or kidnap you—get you out of the way, unless you keep out of *their* way: and if you will but consent to keep snug at Dowlas's for a while, who'd suspect where you was? We could easily arrange with your friend Tagrag that you should——"

"My stars! I'd give something to hear you tell Tagrag—why, I wonder what he'll do!"

"Make you very comfortable, and let you have your own way in every thing."

"Go to the play, for instance, whenever I want, and do all that sort of thing?"

"Nay, try! any thing!—And as for money, I've persuaded Mr. Quirk to consent to our advancing you a certain sum per week, from the present time, while the cause is going on," (Titmouse's heart began to beat fast,) "in order to place you above absolute inconvenience; and when you consider the awful sums we shall have to disburse—cash out of pocket—(counsel, you know, will not open their lips under a guinea)—for court-fees, and other indispensable matters, I should candidly say that four thousand pounds of hard cash out of pocket, advanced by our firm in your case, would be the very lowest." (Titmouse stared at him with an expression of stupid wonder.) "Yes—four thousand pounds, Mr. Titmouse, at the very least—the *very* least." Again he paused, keenly scrutinizing Titmouse's features by the light of the candles, which just then were brought in. "You seem surprised, Mr. Titmouse."

"Why—why—where's all the money to come from, sir?" exclaimed Titmouse, aghast.

"Ah! that is, indeed, a fearful question," replied Gammon, with a very serious air; "but at my request, our firm has agreed to make the necessary advances; and also (for *I* could not bear the sight of your distress, Mr. Titmouse!) to supply your necessities liberally in the mean time, as I was saying."

"Won't you take another glass of wine, Mr. Gammon?" suddenly inquired Titmouse, with a confident air.

"With all my heart, Mr. Titmouse! I'm delighted that you approve of it. I paid enough for it, I can warrant you."

"Cuss me if ever I tasted such wine! Uncommon! Come—no heeltaps, Mr. Gammon—here goes—let's drink—success to the affair!"

"With all my heart, my dear sir—with all my heart. Success to the thing—amen!" and Gammon drained his glass; so did Titmouse. "Ah! Mr. Titmouse, you'll soon have wine enough to float a frigate—and, indeed, what not—with ten thousand a-year?"

"And all the accumulations, you know—ha, ha!"

"Yes—to be sure—accumulations. The sweetest estate that is to be found in all Yorkshire. Gracious, Mr. Titmouse!" continued Gammon, with an excited air, "what may you not do? Go where you like—do what you like—get into Parliament—marry some lovely woman!"

"Lord, Mr. Gammon! you ain't dreaming? Nor I? But now, in course, you must be paid handsome for your trouble! Only say how much—Name your sum! What you please! You only give me all you've said."

"For my part, I wish to rely entirely on your mere word of honour. Between gentlemen, you know—my dear sir."

"You only try me, sir."

"But you see, Mr. Quirk's getting old, and naturally is anxious to provide for those whom he will leave behind him—and so Mr. Snap agreed with him—two to one against me, Mr. Titmouse—of course they carried the day—two to one."

"Only say the figure."

"A single year's income, only—ten thousand pounds will hardly——"

"Ten thousand pounds! By jingo, that *is* a slice out of the cake."

"A mere crumb, my dear sir!—a trifle! Why, we are going to give you that sum at least every year—and, indeed, it was suggested to our firm, that unless you gave us at least a sum of twenty-five thousand pounds—in fact, we were recommended to look out for some other heir."

"It's not to be thought of, sir."

"So I said; and as for throwing it up—to be sure we shall have, ourselves, to borrow large sums to carry on the war—and unless we have your bond for at least ten thousand pounds, we cannot raise a farthing."

"Hang'd if you sha'n't do what you like! Give me your hand, and do what you like, Gammon!"

"Thank you, Titmouse! How I like a glass of wine with a friend in this quiet way!—you'll always find me rejoiced to show——"

"Your hand! By George—Didn't I take a liking to you from the first! But to speak my mind a bit—as for Mr. Quirk—excuse me—but he's a cur—cur—cur—cur-mudgeon—hem!"

"Hope you've not been so imprudent, my dear Titmouse," threw in Gammon, rather anxiously, "as to borrow money, eh?"

"Devil knows, and devil cares! No stamp, I know—bang up to the mark"—here he winked an eye, and put his finger to his nose—"wide awake—Huck—uck—uck—uck! how his name sti—sticks. Your hand, Gammon—here—this, this way—tol de rol, tol de rol—ha! ha! ha!—what are you bobbing your head about for? The floor—how funny—at sea—here we go up, up, up—here we go down, down—oh dear!"—he clapped his hand to his head.

Pythagoras has finely observed, that a man is not to be considered dead drunk till he lies on the floor, and stretches out his arms and legs to prevent his going lower.

See-saw, see-saw, up and down, up and down went every thing about him. Now he felt sinking through the floor, then gently rising to the ceiling. Gammon seemed getting into a mist, and waving about the candles in it. Mr. Titmouse's head swam; his chair seemed to be resting on the waves of the sea.

"I'm afraid the room's rather close, Mr. Titmouse," hastily observed Gammon, perceiving from Titmouse's sudden paleness and silence, but too evident symptoms that his powerful intellect was for a while paralyzed. Gammon started to the window and opened it. Paler, however, and paler became Titmouse. Gammon's game was up much sooner than he had calculated on.

"Mrs. Mumps! Mrs. Mumps! order a coach instantly, and tell Tomkins" (that was the inn porter) "to get his son ready to go home with this gentleman—he's not very well." He was obeyed. It was, in truth, all up with Titmouse—at least for a while.

As soon as Gammon had thus got rid of his distinguished guest, he ordered the table to be cleared of the glasses, and tea to he ready within half an hour. He then

walked out to enjoy the cool evening; on returning, sat pleasantly sipping his tea, now and then dipping into the edifying columns of the *Sunday Flash*, but oftener ruminating upon his recent conversation with Titmouse, and speculating upon its possible results; and a little after eleven o'clock, that good man, at peace with all the world —calm and serene—retired to repose. He had that night rather a singular dream; it was of a snake encircling a monkey, as if in gentle and playful embrace. Suddenly tightening its folds, a crackling sound was heard:—the writhing coils were then slowly unwound—and, with a shudder, he beheld the monster licking over the motionless figure, till it was covered with a viscid slime. Then the serpent began to devour its prey; and, when gorged and helpless, behold, it was immediately fallen upon by two other snakes. To his disturbed fancy, there was a dim resemblance between their heads and those of Quirk and Snap—he woke—thank God! it was only a dream.

CHAPTER IV.

When, after his return from Mr. Gammon's chambers, at Thavies' Inn, Titmouse woke at an early hour in the morning, he was labouring under the ordinary effects of unaccustomed inebriety. His mouth and lips were perfectly parched; there was a horrid weight pressing on his aching eyes, and upon his throbbing head. His pillow seemed undulating beneath him, and every thing swimming around him: but when, to crown the whole, he was roused from a momentary nap by the insupportable, the loathed importunities of Mrs. Squallop, that he would just sit up and partake of three thick rounds of hot buttered toast, and a great basin of smoking tea, which would do him so much good, and settle his stomach—at all events, if he'd only have a thimble full of gin in it—poor Titmouse was fairly overcome. He lay in bed all that day, during which he underwent very severe sufferings; and it was not till towards night that he began to have any thing like a distinct recollection of the evening he had spent with Mr. Gammon; who, by the way, had sent one of the clerks during the afternoon, to inquire after him. He did not get out of bed on the Tuesday till past twelve o'clock, when, in a very rickety condition, he made his appearance at the shop of Messrs Dowlas & Co.; on approaching which he felt a sudden faintness, arising from mingled apprehension and disgust.

"What are you doing here, sir?—You're no longer in my employment, sir," exclaimed Tagrag, attempting to speak calmly, as he hurried down the shop to meet Titmouse, and planted himself right in the way of his languid and pallid shopman.

"Sir!"—faintly exclaimed Titmouse, with his hat in his hand.

"Very much obliged, sir—very! by the offer of your valuable services," said Tagrag. "But—*that's* the way

out again, sir—that!—there!—good morning, sir!—that's the way out"—and he edged on Titmouse, till he had got him fairly into the street—with infinite difficulty restraining himself from giving him a parting kick. Titmouse stood for a moment before the door, trembling and aghast, looking in a bewildered manner at the shop: but Tagrag again making his appearance, Titmouse slowly walked away and returned to his lodgings. Oh that Mr. Gammon had witnessed the scene—thought he—and so have been satisfied that it had been Tagrag who had put an end to his services, not he himself who had quitted it!

The next day, about the same hour, Mr. Gammon made his appearance at Messrs. Dowlas and Company's, and inquired for Mr. Tagrag, who presently presented himself, and recognising Mr. Gammon, who naturally reminded him of Titmouse, changed colour a little.

"What did you please to want, sir?" inquired Mr. Tagrag, with a would-be resolute air, twirling round his watch-key with some energy.

"Only a few minutes' conversation, sir, if you please," said Mr. Gammon, with such a significant manner as a little disturbed Mr. Tagrag; who, with an ill-supported sneer, bowed very low, and led the way to his own little room. Having closed the door, he, with an exceedingly civil air, begged Mr. Gammon to be seated; and then occupied the chair opposite to him, and awaited the issue with ill-disguised anxiety.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Tagrag," commenced Gammon, with his usual elegant and feeling manner, "that any misunderstanding should have arisen between you and Mr. Titmouse."

"You're a lawyer, sir, I suppose?" Mr. Gammon bowed. "Then you must know, sir, that there are always two sides to a quarrel."

"Yes—you are right, Mr. Tagrag; and, having already heard Mr. Titmouse's version, may I be favoured with your account of your reasons for dismissing him? For he tells us that yesterday you dismissed him suddenly from your employment, without giving him any warn"——

"So I did, sir; and what of that?" inquired Tagrag, tossing his head with an air of defiance. "Things are

come to a pretty pass indeed, when a man can't dismiss a drunken, idle, impudent vagabond."

"Do you seriously charge him with being such a character, and can you *prove* your charges, Mr. Tagrag?" inquired Gammon, gravely.

"Prove 'em! yes, sir, a hundred times over; so will my young men."

"And in a court of justice, Mr. Tagrag?"

"Oh! he's going to *law*, is he? That's why you're come here—ah, ha! when you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, you may get your bill out of Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse!—ha, ha, ha!" laughed Tagrag, hoping thereby to conceal how much he was really startled.

"Well—that's our look-out, Mr. Tagrag: to Mr. Titmouse, his character is as valuable as Mr. Tagrag's is to him. In short, he has placed himself in our hands, and we are resolved to go on with the case if it costs us a hundred pounds—we are indeed, Mr. Tagrag."

"Why—he's not a penny in the world to go to law with!" exclaimed Tagrag, with an air of mingled wonder and contempt.

"But you forget, Mr. Tagrag, that if Mr. Titmouse's account shall turn out to be correct, it will be *your* pocket that must pay all the expenses, amounting probably to twenty times the sum which a jury may award to Mr. Titmouse."

"Law, sir!—It's not justice—I hate law—give me common sense and common honesty!"

"Both of them would condemn your conduct, Mr. Tagrag; for I have heard a full account of what Mr. Titmouse has suffered at your hands—of the cause of your sudden warning to him, and your still more sudden dismissal of yesterday. Oh, Mr. Tagrag! upon my honour, it won't do—not for a moment—and should you go on, rely upon what I tell you, that it will cost you dear."

"And suppose, sir," said Tagrag, in a would-be contemptuous tone—"I should have witnesses to prove all I've said—which of us will look funny then, sir?"

"Which, indeed! However, since that is your humour, I can only assure you that Mr. Titmouse defies you to prove any misconduct on his part. We have taken

up his cause, and, as you may perhaps find, we shall not easily let it drop."

"I mean no offence, sir," said Tagrag, in a mitigated tone; "but I must say, that ever since you came here, Titmouse has been quite another person. He seems not to know who I am, nor to care either—and he's perfectly unbearable."

"My dear sir, what has he *said* or *done?*—that, you know, is what you must be prepared to prove."

"Well, sir, and which of us is likely to be best off for witnesses?—Think of that, sir,—I've eighteen young men——"

"We shall chance that, sir," replied Gammon, shrugging his shoulders: "but again I ask, what did you dismiss him for? and I request a plain, straightforward answer."

"What did I dismiss him for? Haven't I eyes and ears?—First and foremost, he's the most odious mannered fellow I ever came near—and—he hadn't a shirt to his back, when I first took him—the ungrateful wretch! Sir, it's not against the law, I suppose, to hate a man;—and if it isn't, how I hate Titmouse!"

"Mr. Tagrag,"—said Gammon, lowering his voice, and looking very earnestly at his companion—"can I say a word to you in confidence—the strictest confidence?"

"What's it about, sir?" inquired Tagrag with an apprehensive air.

"I dare say you may have felt, perhaps, rather surprised at the interest which I—in fact our office, the office of Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, in Saffron Hill—appear to have taken in Mr. Titmouse."

"Why, sir, it's *your* look-out to see how you're to be paid for what you're doing,—and I dare say lawyers generally keep a pretty sharp look-out in that direction."

Gammon smiled, and continued—"It may, perhaps, a little surprise you, Mr. Tagrag, to hear that your present (ought I to say, your *late?*) shopman, Mr. Tittlebat Titmouse, is at this moment probably the very luckiest man in this kingdom."

"Why—you don't mean to say he's drawn a prize in the lottery?"—exclaimed Tagrag, pricking up his ears.

"Pho! my dear sir, *that* is a mere trifle compared with

the good fortune that has befallen him. He turns out to be the undoubted owner of an estate worth at least ten thousand a-year, besides a great accumulation of ready money."

"Ten thousand a-year, sir!—My Titmouse!—Tittlebat Titmouse!—Ten thousand a-year!" faltered Tagrag, after a pause.

"I have as little doubt of the fact, as I have that you yesterday turned him out of doors."

"But—who could have dreamt it? How was—how was I to know it?"

"That's the fact, however," said Gammon, shrugging his shoulders. Tagrag wriggled about in his chair, put his hands in and out of his pockets, scratched his head, and continued staring open-mouthed at the bearer of such astonishing intelligence. "Perhaps all this is meant as a joke, sir,"—said he—"if so—it's—it's—a very——"

"It's one of his solicitors, who were fortunate enough to make the discovery, that tells you. I solemnly assure you of the fact, Mr. Tagrag. Ten thousand a-year, at the least, is Mr. Titmouse now the real owner of."

"Why, that's two hundred thousand pounds, sir!"—exclaimed Tagrag, with an awe-struck air.

"At the very least——"

"Lord, Mr. Gammon!—Excuse me, sir, but how *did* you find it out?"

"Mere accident—mere accident, sir."

"And does Mr. Titmouse know it?"

"Ever since the day after that on which I called on him here."

"You don't say so!"—Tagrag continued silent for nearly a minute, evidently amazed beyond all power of expression.

"Well,"—at length he observed—"I *will* say this—he's the most amiable young gentleman—the *very amiablest* young gentleman I—ever—came near. I always thought that there was something uncommon superior-like in his looks."

"Yes—I think he *is* of rather an amiable turn," observed Gammon, with an expressive smile—"and so intelligent——"

"Intelligent! Mr. Gammon! you should only have

known him as I have known him!—Well, to be sure!—Lord! His only fault was, that he was above his business; but when one comes to think of it, how could it be otherwise? From the time I first clapped eyes on him—I—I—knew he was—a superior article—quite superior—you know what I mean, sir?—He couldn't help it, of course!—To be sure—he never was much liked by the other young men; but that was all jealousy!—all jealousy; I saw that all the while." Here he looked at the door, and added in a very low tone, "Many sleepless nights has their bad treatment of Mr. Titmouse cost me!—Even I, now and then, used to look and speak sharply to him—just to keep him as it were, down to the mark of the others—he was so uncommon handsome and genteel in his manner, sir. Hang me, if I didn't tell Mrs. Tagrag the very first day he came to me, that he was a gentleman born—or ought to have been one."

Now, do you suppose, acute reader, that Mr. Tagrag was insincere in all this? By no means. He spoke the real dictates of his heart, unaware of the sudden change which had taken place in his feelings. It certainly has an ugly look—but it was *the nature of the beast;* his eye suddenly caught a glimpse of the golden calf, and he instinctively fell down and worshipped it. "Well—at all events," said Mr. Gammon, scarcely able to keep a serious expression on his face—"though not a gentleman born he'll *live* like a gentleman—and spend his money like one, too."

"I—I—dare say—he will!—I wonder how he *will* get through a quarter of it!—what do *you* think he'll do, sir?"

"Heaven only knows—he may do just what he likes."

"I declare—I feel as if I shouldn't be quite right again for the rest of the day!—I own to you, sir, that all yesterday and to-day I've been on the point of going to Mr. Titmouse's lodgings to apologize for—for——Good gracious me! one can't take it all in at once—Ten thousand a-year!—Many a lord hasn't got more—some not as much, I'll be bound!—Dear me, what will he do!—Well, one thing I'm *sure* of—he'll never have a truer friend than plain Thomas Tagrag, though I've not always been a flattering him—I respected him too much!—The many little things I've borne with in Titmouse, that in any one else I'd have

—But why didn't he tell me, sir? We should have understood one another in a moment."—Here he paused abruptly; for his breath seemed suddenly taken away, as he reviewed the series of indignities which he had latterly inflicted on Titmouse—the kind of life which that amiable young gentleman had led in his establishment.

Never had the keen Gammon enjoyed any thing more exquisitely than the scene which I have been describing. To a man of his practical sagacity in the affairs of life, and knowledge of human nature, nothing could appear more ludicrously contemptible than the conduct of poor Tagrag. How differently are the minds of men constituted! How Gammon despised Tagrag! and how the reader must respect Gammon!

"*Now*, may I take for granted, Mr. Tagrag, that we understand each other?" inquired Gammon.

"Yes, sir," replied Tagrag, meekly. "But do you think Mr. Titmouse will ever forgive or forget the little misunderstanding we've lately had? If I could but explain to him how I have been acting a part towards him—all for his good!"

"You may have opportunities for doing so, if you are really so disposed, Mr. Tagrag; for I have something seriously to propose to you. Circumstances render it desirable that for some little time this important affair should be kept as quiet as possible; and it is Mr. Titmouse's wish, and ours—as his confidential professional advisers—that for some few months he should continue in your establishment, and apparently in your service as before."

"In my service!—my service!" interrupted Tagrag, opening his eyes to their utmost. "I shan't know how to behave in my own premises! Have a man with ten thousand a-year behind my counter, sir? I might as well have the Lord Mayor! Sir, it can't—it can't be. Now, if Mr. Titmouse choose to become a *partner* in the house—ay, there might be something in that—he needn't have any trouble—be only a sleeping partner." Tagrag warmed with the thought. "Really, sir, that wouldn't be so much amiss—would it!" Gammon assured him that it was out of the question; and gave him some of the reasons for the proposal which he (Mr. Gammon) had been making.

While Gammon fancied that Tagrag was paying profound attention to what he was saying, Tagrag's thoughts had shot far ahead. He had an only child—a daughter, about twenty years old—Miss Tabitha Tagrag; and the delightful possibility of her by-and-by becoming Mrs. Titmouse, put her amiable parent into a perspiration. Into the proposal just made by Mr. Gammon he fell with great eagerness, which he attempted to conceal—for what innumerable opportunities could it not afford him for bringing about the desire of his heart—for throwing the lovely young couple into each other's way, endearing them to each other! Oh, delightful! It really looked almost as if fate had determined that the thing should come to pass! If Mr. Titmouse did not dine with him, Mrs. and Miss Tagrag, at Satin Lodge, Clapham, on the very next Sunday, it should, Tagrag resolved, be owing to no fault of *his*.—Mr. Gammon having arranged every thing exactly as he had desired, and having again enjoined Mr. Tagrag to absolute secresy, took his departure. Mr. Tagrag, in his excitement, thrust out his hand, and grasped that of Gammon, which was extended towards him somewhat coldly and reluctantly. Tagrag attended him with extreme obsequiousness to the door; and on his departure, walked back rapidly to his own room, and sat down for nearly half an hour in deep thought. Abruptly rising at length, he clapped his hat on his head, and saying that he should soon be back, hurried out to call upon his future son-in-law, full of affectionate anxiety concerning his health—and vowing within himself, that thenceforth it should be the study of his life to make his daughter and Titmouse happy! There could be no doubt of the reality of the event just communicated to him by Mr. Gammon; for he was a well-known solicitor, and had had an interview on important business with Titmouse a fortnight ago, which could have been about nothing but the prodigious event just communicated to himself. Such things had happened to others—why not to Tittlebat Titmouse? In short, Tagrag had no doubt on the matter.

He found Titmouse not at home; so he left a most particular civil message, half a dozen times repeated, with Mrs. Squallop—to the effect that he, Mr. Tagrag, should be only too happy to see Mr. Titmouse at No. 375, Oxford

Street, whenever it might suit his convenience; that he was most deeply concerned to hear of Mr. Titmouse's indisposition and anxious to learn from himself that he had recovered, &c., &c., &c.;—all which, together with one or two other little matters, which Mrs. Squallop could not help putting together, satisfied that shrewd lady that "something was in the wind about Mr. Titmouse;" and made her reflect rather anxiously on one or two violent scenes she had had with him, and which she was now ready entirely to forget and forgive. Having thus done all that at present was in his power to forward the thing, the anxious and excited Tagrag returned to his shop; on entering which, one Lutestring, his principal young man, eagerly apprised him of a claim which he had, as he imagined, only the moment before established to the thanks of Mr. Tagrag, by having "bundled off, neck and crop, that hodious Titmouse," who, about five minutes before, had, it seemed, had the "impudence" to present himself at the shop-door, and walk in as if nothing had happened!! Titmouse had so presented himself, in consequence of a call from Mr. Gammon, immediately after his interview with Tagrag.

"You—ordered—Mr. Titmouse—off!" exclaimed Tagrag, starting back aghast, and stopping his voluble and officious assistant.

"Of course, sir—after what happened yester——"

"Who authorized, you, Mr. Lutestring?" inquired Tagrag, striving to choke down the rage that was rising within him.

"Why, sir, I *really* supposed that——"

"You supposed! You're a meddling, impertinent, disgusting"— Suddenly his face was overspread with smiles, as three or four elegantly dressed customers entered, whom he received with profuse obeisances. But when their backs were turned, he directed a lightning look towards Lutestring, and retreated once more to his room, to meditate on the agitating events of the last hour. The extraordinary alteration in Mr. Tagrag's behaviour was attributed by his shopmen to his having been frightened out of his wits by the threats of Titmouse's lawyer—for such it was clear the stranger was; and more than one

of them stored it up in their minds as a useful precedent against some future occasion.

Twice afterwards during the day did Tagrag call at Titmouse's lodgings—but in vain; and on returning the third time felt not a little disquieted. He determined, however, to call the first thing on the ensuing morning; if he should then fail of seeing Mr. Titmouse, he was resolved to go to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon and Snap—and besides, address a very affectionate letter to Mr. Titmouse. How totally changed had become all his feelings towards that gentleman within the last few hours! The more Tagrag reflected on Titmouse's conduct, the more he saw in it to approve of. How steady and regular had he been in his habits! how civil and obliging! how patient of rebuke! how pleasing in his manners to the customers! Surely, surely, thought Tagrag, Titmouse can't have been four long years in my employ without getting a—sort of a—feeling—of attachment to me—he'd have left long ago if he hadn't? It was true there had now and then been tiffs between them; but who could agree always? Even Mrs. Tagrag and he, when they were courting, often fell out with one another. Tagrag was now ready to forget and forgive all—he had never meant any harm to Titmouse. He believed that poor Tittlebat was an orphan, poor soul! alone in the wide world—*now* he would become the prey of designing strangers. Tagrag did not like the appearance of Gammon. No doubt that person would try and ingratiate himself as much as possible with Titmouse! Then Titmouse was remarkably good-looking. "I wonder what Tabby will think of him when she sees him!" How anxious Tittlebat must be to see her—*his* daughter! How could Tagrag make Tittlebat's stay at his premises (for he could not bring himself to believe that on the morrow he could not set all right, and disavow the impudent conduct of Lutestring) agreeable and delightful? He would discharge the first of his young men that did not show Titmouse proper respect. What low lodgings poor Tittlebat lived in! Why could he not take up his quarters at Satin Lodge? They always had a nice spare bedroom! Ah! *that* would be a stroke! How Tabby could endear herself to him! What a number of things Mrs. Tagrag could do to make him comfortable!

About seven o'clock, Tagrag quitted his premises, in Oxford Street, for his country house; and occupied with these and similar delightful and anxious thoughts and speculations, hurried along Oxford Street on his way to the Clapham stage, without thinking of his umbrella, though it rained fast. When he had taken his place on the coach-box, beside old Crack, (as he had done almost every night for years,) he was so unusually silent, that Crack naturally thought his best passenger was going to become bankrupt, or compound with his creditors, or something of that sort. Mr. Tagrag could hardly keep his temper at the slow pace old Crack was driving at—just when Tagrag could have wished to gallop the whole way. Never had he descended with so much briskness, as when the coach at length drew up before the little green gate, which opened on the nice little gravel walk, which led up to the little green wooden porch, which sheltered the slim door which admitted you into Satin Lodge. As Tagrag stood for a moment wiping his wet shoes upon the mat, he could not help observing, for the first time, by the inward light of ten thousand a-year, how uncommon small the passage was—and thinking that it would never do, when he should be the father-in-law of a man worth ten thousand a-year—he could easily let that house, and take a large one. As he hung his hat upon the peg, the mischievous insolence of Lutestring occurred to him; and he deposited such a prodigious execration upon that gentleman's name, as must have sunk a far more buoyant sinner many fathoms deeper than usual, into a certain hot and deep place that shall be nameless.

Mrs. and Miss Tagrag were sitting in the front parlour, intending to take tea as soon as Mr. Tagrag should have arrived. It was not a large room, but furnished prettily, according to the taste of the owners. There was only one window, and it had a flaunting white summer curtain. The walls were ornamented with three pictures, in heavily gilt frames, being portraits of Mr. Mrs., and Miss Tagrag, and I do not wish to say more of these pictures, than that in each of them the *dress* was done with singular exactness and fidelity—the faces seeming to have been painted in, in order to complete the thing. The skinny little Miss Tagrag sat at the worn-out, jingling piano

forte, playing—oh, horrid and doleful sound! *The Battle of Prague.* Mrs. Tagrag, a fat, showily dressed woman, of about fifty, her cap having a prodigious number of artificial flowers in it, sat reading.

"Well, Dolly, how are you to-night?" inquired Tagrag, with unusual briskness, on entering the room.

"Tolerable, thank you, Tag," replied Mrs. Tagrag, mournfully, with a sigh, closing the cheerful volume she had been perusing—it having been recommended the preceding Sunday from the pulpit by its pious and gifted author, Mr. Horror, to be read and prayed over every day by every member of his congregation.

"And how are *you*, Tabby?" said Tagrag, addressing his daughter. "Come and kiss me, you little slut—come!"

"No I sha'n't, pa! Do let me go on with my practising"—and twang! twang! went those infernal keys.

"D'ye hear, Tab? Come and kiss me, you little minx——"

"Really, pa, how provoking—just as I am in the middle of the *Cries of the Wounded!* I sha'n't!—that's flat."

The doating parent could not, however, be denied; so he stepped to the piano, put his arm round his dutiful daughter's neck, kissed her fondly, and then stood for a moment behind her, admiring her brilliant execution of *The Trumpet of Victory.* Having changed his coat, and put on an old pair of shoes, Tagrag was comfortable for the evening.

"Tabby plays wonderful well, Dolly, don't she?" said Tagrag, as the tea-things were being brought in, by way of beginning a conversation, while he drew his chair nearer to his wife.

"Ah! I'd a deal rather see her reading something serious—for life is short, Tag, and eternity's long."

"Botheration!—stuff!—tut!"

"You may find it out one day, my dear, when its too late——"

"I'll tell you what, Dolly," said Tagrag, angrily, "you're coming a great deal too much of that sort of thing—my house is getting like a Methodist meeting-house. I can't bear it—I can't! What the deuce is come to you all in these parts, lately?"

"Ah, Tagrag," replied his wife with a sigh, "I can only pray for you—I can do no more——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Tagrag, with an air of desperate disgust, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and stretching his legs to their utmost extent under the table. "I'll tell you what, Mrs. T." he added, after a while, "too much of one thing is good for nothing; you may choke a dog with pudding;—I sha'n't renew my sittings at Mr. Horror's."

"Now, pa, do! That's a love of a pa!" interposed Miss Tagrag, twirling round on her music-stool. "All Clapham's running after him—he's quite the rage! There's the Dugginses, the Pips, the Joneses, the Maggots—and, really, Mr. Horror does preach such dreadful things, it's quite delightful to look round and see all the people with their eyes and mouths wide open—and ours is such a good pew for seeing—and Mr. Horror is such a bee—yeautiful preacher,—isn't he, ma?"

"Yes, love, he is—but, I wish I could see you profit by him, and preparing for death——"

"Why, ma, how *can* you go on in that ridiculous way? You know I'm not twenty yet!"

"Well, well! poor Tabby!" here Mrs. Tagrag's voice faltered—"a day will come when——"

"Play me the *Devil among the Tailors*, or *Copenhagen Waltz*, or something of that sort, Tabby, or I shall be sick! —I can't bear it!"

"Well!—Oh, my!—I never!—Mr. Tagrag!" exclaimed his astounded wife.

"Play away, Tab, or I'll go and sit in the kitchen! They're cheerful *there!* The next time I come across Mr. Horror, if I don't give him a bit of my mind,"—here he paused, and slapped his hand with much energy upon the table. Mrs. Tagrag wiped her eyes, sighed, and resumed her book. Miss Tagrag began to make tea, her papa gradually forgetting his rage, as he fixed his dull gray eyes fondly on the pert skinny countenance of his daughter.

"By the way, Tag," exclaimed Mrs. Tagrag, suddenly, but in the same mournful tone, addressing her husband, you havn't of course forgot the lace for my new bonnet?"

"Never once thought of it," replied Tagrag, doggedly.

"You haven't! Good gracious! what am I to go to

chapel in next Sunday!" she exclaimed, with sudden alarm, closing her book, "and our seat in the very front of the gallery! bless me! I shall have a hundred eyes on me!"

"Now that you're coming down a bit, and dropped out of the clouds, Dolly," said her husband, much relieved, "I'll tell you a bit of news that will, I fancy, rather——"

"Come, what is it, Tag?" eagerly inquired his wife.

"What should you say of a chance of a certain somebody" (here he looked unutterable things at his daughter) "that shall be nameless, becoming mistress of ten thousand a-year?"

"Why"—Mrs. Tagrag changed color—"has any one fallen in love with Tab?"

"What should you say of our Tab marrying a man with ten thousand a-year? There's for you! Isn't *that* better than all your religion?"

"Oh Tag, don't say that; but" (here she hastily turned down the leaf of *Groans from the Bottomless Pit*, and tossed that inestimable work upon the sofa) "do tell me, lovy, what *are* you talking about?"

"What indeed, Dolly!—I'm going to have him here to dinner next Sunday."

Miss Tagrag having been listening with breathless eagerness to this little colloquy between her prudent and amiable parents, unconscious of what she was about, was pouring all the tea into the sugar-basin.

Have *who*, dear Tag?" inquired Mrs. Tagrag impatiently.

"Who? why whom but Tiltlebat Titmouse! You've seen him, and heard me speak of him."

"What! that odious, nasty——"

Hush, hush!" involuntarily exclaimed Tagrag with an apprehensive air—"That's all past and gone—I was always too hard on him. Well, he's turned up all of a sudden master of ten thousand a-year. He has, indeed —you'll see if he hasn't."

Mrs. Tagrag and her daughter sat in speechless wonder.

"Where did he see Tab, Taggy?" at length inquired Mrs. Tagrag.

"Oh—I—I—why—you see—I don't exactly think *that* signifies so much—he *will* see her next Sunday."

"So then he's positively coming?"

"Y—e—s; I've no doubt."—I'll discharge Lutestring to-morrow, thought Tagrag.

"But aren't we counting our chickens, Tag, before they're hatched? If Titmouse is all of a sudden become such a catch, he'll be snapped up in a minute."

"Why, you see, Dolly—we're first in the market, I'm sure of that—his attorney tells me he's to be kept quite snug and quiet under my care for months, and see no one. So when he once gets sight of Tabby, and gets into her company—eh! Tab, sweet! you'll do all the rest—hem!"

"La, pa! how you go on!" simpered Miss Tagrag.

"You must do your part, Tab," said her father—we'll do ours. He'll bite, you may depend on it!"

"What sort of a looking young man is he, dear pa?" inquired Miss Tagrag, blushing, and her heart fluttering very fast.

"Oh, you must have seen him, sweetest——"

"How should I ever notice any of the lots of young men at the shop, pa?—I don't at all know him!"

"Well—he's the handsomest, most genteel-looking fellow I ever came across; he's long been an ornament to my establishment, for his good looks and civil and obliging manners——"

"Dear me," interrupted Mrs. Tagrag, anxiously addressing her daughter, "I hope, Tabby, that Miss Nix will send home your lilac-coloured frock by next Sunday."

"If she don't, ma, I'll take care she never makes any thing more for me."

"We'll call there to-morrow, love, and hurry her on," said her mother; and from that moment until eleven o'clock, when the amiable and interesting trio retired to rest, nothing was talked of but the charming Titmouse, and the good fortune he so richly deserved, and how long the courtship was likely to last. Mrs. Tagrag, who for the last month or so, had always remained on her knees before getting into bed, at least ten minutes, on this eventful evening compressed her prayers, I regret to say, into one minute and a half's time. As for Tagrag, a hardened heathen, he always tumbled prayerless into bed, the moment he was undressed; while the accomplished Miss Tabby Tagrag, having taken only half an hour to put her hair into papers, popped into bed directly she had blown

the candle out, without saying *any* prayers—or even thinking of finishing the novel which lay under her pillow, and which she had got on the sly from the circulating library of the late Miss Snooks. For several hours she lay in a delicious reverie, imagining herself become Mrs. Tittlebat Titmouse, riding about Clapham in a handsome carriage, going to the play every night; and what would the three Miss Knipp's say when they heard of it—they'd burst! And such a handsome man, too!

She sunk, at length, into unconsciousness, amidst a soft confusion of glistening white satin—favours—bridesmaids —Mrs. Tittlebat Tit—Tit—Tit—Tit—mouse.

Tittlebat, about half past nine on the ensuing morning, was sitting in his room in a somewhat dismal humour, musing on many things, and little imagining the intense interest he had excited in the feelings of the amiable occupants of Satin Lodge. A knock at his door startled him out of his reverie. Behold, on opening it, Mr. Tagrag!

"Your most obedient, sir," commenced that gentleman, in a subdued and obsequious manner, plucking off his hat the instant that he saw Titmouse. "I hope you're better, sir!—been very uneasy, sir, about you."

"Please to walk in, sir," replied Titmouse, not a little fluttered—"I'm better, sir, I thank you."

"Happy to hear it, sir! but am also come to offer humble apologies for the rudeness of that upstart that was so rude to you yesterday, at my premises—know whom I mean, eh?—Lutestring—I shall get rid of him, I do think——"

"Thank you, sir——But—but—when I was in your employ——"

"*Was* in my employ!" interrupted Tagrag, with a sigh, —"Its no use trying to hide it any longer! I've all along seen you was a world too good—quite above your situation in my poor shop! I *may* have been wrong, Mr. Titmouse," he continued, diffidently, as he placed himself on what seemed the only chair in the room, "but I did it all for the best—eh?—don't you understand me, Mr. Titmouse?" Titmouse continued looking on the floor, incredulously and sheepishly.

"Very much obliged, sir—but must say you've rather a funny way of showing it, sir. Look at the sort of life you've led me for this—"

"Ah! knew you'd say so! But I can lay my hand on my heart, Mr. Titmouse, and declare to God—I can, indeed, Mr. Titmouse." Titmouse preserved a very embarrassing silence. "See, I'm out of your good books—but—won't you forget and forgive, Mr. Titmouse? I *meant* well. Nay, I humbly beg forgiveness for every thing you've not liked in me. Can I say more? Come, Mr. Titmouse, you've a noble nature, and I ask forgiveness."

"You—you ought to do it before the whole shop," replied Titmouse, a little relenting—"for they've all seen your goings on."

"Them!—the brutes!—the vulgar fellows! you and I, Mr. Titmouse, are a *leetle* above them! D'ye think we ought to mind what *servants* say?—Only say the word, and I make a clean sweep of 'em all; you shall have the premises to yourself, Mr. Titmouse, within an hour after any of those chaps shows you disrespect."

"Ah! I don't know—you've used me most uncommon bad—far worse than they have—you've nearly broke my heart, sir! You have!"

"Well, my womankind at home are right, after all! They told me all along I was going the wrong way to work, when I said how I tried to keep your pride down, and prevent you from having your head turned by knowing your good looks. My little girl has said, with tears in her dear eyes—'you'll break his spirit, dear papa—if he's handsome, wasn't it God that made him so?'" The little frost-work which Titmouse had thrown around his heart, began to melt like snow under sunbeams. "The women are always right, Mr. Titmouse, and *we're* always wrong," continued Tagrag, earnestly, perceiving his advantage. "Upon my soul, I could kick myself for my stupidity, and cruelty, too!"

"Ah, I should think so! No one knows what I've suffered! And now that I'm—I suppose you've heard it all, sir?—what's in the wind—and all that?"

"Yes, sir—Mr. Gammon, (that most respectable gentleman,) and I have had a long talk yesterday about you, in which he did certainly tell me every thing—nothing like confidence, Mr. Titmouse, when gentleman meets gentleman, you know. It's really delightful!"

"*Isn't* it, sir?" eagerly interrupted Titmouse, his eyes glistening with sudden rapture.

"Ah! ten thous—I *must* shake hands with you, my dear Mr. Titmouse;" and for the first time in their lives their hands touched, Tagrag squeezing that of Titmouse with energetic cordiality; while he added, with a little emotion in his tone—"Thomas Tagrag may be a plain-spoken and wrong-headed man, but he's a warm heart."

"And did Mr. Gammon tell you *all*, sir?" eagerly interrupted Titmouse.

"Every thing—every thing; quite confidential, I assure you, for he saw the interest I felt in you."

"And did he say about my—hem!—eh? my stopping a few weeks longer with you?" inquired Titmouse, chagrin overspreading his features.

"I think he did, Mr. Titmouse! He's bent on it, sir? And so would any true friend of your's be—because you see," here he dropped his voice, and looked very mysteriously at Titmouse—"in short, I quite agree with Mr. Gammon!"

"Do you indeed, sir!" exclaimed Titmouse, with rather an uneasy look.

"I do, i' faith! Why, they'd give thousands and thousands to get you out of the way—and what's money to them? But they must look very sharp that get at you in the premises of Thomas Tagrag. Talking of that, ah, ha!—it *will* be a funny thing to see *you*, Mr. Titmouse—Squire Titmouse—ah, ha, ha!"

"You won't hardly expect me to go out with *goods*, I suppose, sir?"

"Ha, ha, ha!—Ha, ha, ha!—Might as well ask me if I'd set you to clean my shoes! No, no, my dear Mr. Titmouse, you and I have done as master and servant; it's only as friends that we know each other now. You may say and do whatever you like, and come and go when and where you like.—It's true it will make my other hands rather jealous, and get me into trouble; but what do I care? Suppose they *do* all give me warning for your sake? Let 'em go, say I!" He snapped his fingers with an air of defiance. "*Your* looks and manners would keep a shop full of customers—one Titmouse is worth a hundred of them."

"You speak uncommon gentleman-like, sir," said Titmouse, with a little excitement—"and if you'd only *always*—but that's all past and gone; and I've no objections to say at once, that all the articles I may want in your line I'll have at your establishment, pay cash down, and ask for no discount. And I'll send all my friends, for, in course, sir, you know, I shall have lots of them!"

"Don't forget your oldest, your truest, your humblest friend, Mr. Titmouse," said Tagrag, with a cringing air.

"That I wont!"

It flashed across his mind that a true and old friend would be only too happy to lend him a ten-pound note.

"Hem!—now, *are* you such a friend, Mr. Tagrag?"

"Am I?—Can you doubt me? Try me! See what I could not do for you! Friend, indeed!"

"Well, I believe you, sir! And the fact is, a—a—a—you see Mr. Tagrag, though all this heap of money's *coming* to me, I'm precious low just *now*."

"Y—e—e—e—s, Mr. Titmouse," quoth Tagrag, anxiously; his dull gray eye fixed on that of Titmouse steadfastly.

"Well—if you've a mind to prove your words, Mr. Tagrag, and don't mind advancing me a ten-pound note—"

"Hem!" involuntarily uttered Tagrag, so suddenly and violently, that it made Titmouse almost start off his seat. Then Tagrag's face flushed over, he twirled about his watch-key rapidly, and wriggled about in his chair with visible agitation.

"Oh, you aren't going to do it! if so, you'd better say it at once," quoth Titmouse, rather cavalierly.

"Why—*was* ever any thing so unfortunate?" stammered Tagrag. "That cursed lot of French goods I bought only yesterday, to be paid for this morning—and it will drain me of every penny!"

"Ah—yes! True! Well, it don't much signify," said Titmouse, carelessly, running his hand through his hair. "In fact, I needn't have bothered an old friend; Mr. Gammon says he's my banker to any amount. I beg pardon, I'm sure—"

Tagrag was in a dire dilemma. He felt so flustrated

by the suddenness and seriousness of the thing, that he could not see his way plain in any direction.

"Let me see," at length he stammered; and pulling a ready-reckoner out of his pocket, he affected to be consulting it, as if to ascertain merely the state of his banker's account, but really desiring a few moments' time to collect his thoughts. 'Twas in vain, however; nothing occurred to him; he saw no way of escape; his old friend the devil, deserting him for the moment, supplied him with no ready lie. *He* must, he feared, cash up. "Well," said he—"it certainly is rather unfortunate, just at this precise moment; but I'll step to the shop, and see how my ready-money matters stand. It sha'n't be a trifle, Mr. Titmouse, that shall stand between us. But—if I *should* be hard run—perhaps—eh? Would a five-pound note do?"

"Why—a—a—if it wouldn't suit you to advance the ten—"

"I dare say," interrupted Tagrag, a trifle relieved, "I shall be able to accommodate you. Perhaps you'll step on to the shop presently, and then we can talk over matters. By the way, did you ever see any thing so odd! forgot the main thing; come and take your mutton with me at Clapham, next Sunday—my womankind will be quite delighted. Nay, 'tis *their* invitation—ha, ha!"

"You're very kind," replied Titmouse, colouring with pleasure. Here seemed the first pale primrose of the coming spring—an invitation to Satin Lodge.

"The kindness will be yours, Mr. Titmouse. We shall be quite alone; have you all to ourselves; only me, my wife, and daughter—an only child, Mr. Titmouse—*such* a child! She's really often said to me, 'I wonder'—but,—I won't make you vain, eh? May I call it a fixture?"

"'Pon my life, Mr. Tagrag, you're monstrous uncommon polite. It's true, I was going to dine with Mr. Gammon—"

"Oh! pho! (I mean no disrespect, mind!) he's only a bachelor—I've ladies in the case, and all that—eh, Mr. Titmouse? and a *young* one."

"Well—thank you, sir. Since you're so pressing—"

"That's it! An engagement—Satin Lodge—for Sun-

day next," said Tagrag, rising and looking at his watch. "Time for me to be off. See you soon at the shop? Soon arrange that little matter of business, eh? You understand? Good by! good by!" and shaking Titmouse cordially by the hand, Tagrag took his departure. As he hurried on to his shop, he felt in a most painful perplexity about this loan of five pounds. It was truly like squeezing five drops of blood out of his heart. But what was to be done? Could he offend Titmouse? Where was he to stop, if he once began? Dare he ask for security? Suppose the whole affair should turn into smoke?

Now, consider the folly of Tagrag. Here was he in all this terrible pucker about advancing *five pounds* on the strength of prospects and chances which he had deemed safe for adventuring *his daughter* upon—her, the only object on earth (except money) that he regarded with any thing like sincere affection. How was this? The splendour of the future possible good fortune of his daughter, might, perhaps, have dazzled and confused his perceptions. Then, again, *that* was a *remote* contingency; but this sudden appeal to his pocket—the demand of an immediate outlay and venture—was an instant pressure, and he felt it severely. Immediate profit and loss was every thing to Tagrag. He was, in truth, a *tradesman to his heart's core.* If he could have seen the immediate *quid pro quo*—could have got, if only by way of earnest, as it were, a bit of poor Titmouse's heart, and locked it up in his desk, he would not have cared so much; it would have been a little in his line;—but here was a *five-pound note* going out forthwith, and nothing immediate, visible, palpable, replacing it. Oh! Titmouse, had unconsciously pulled Tagrag's very heart-strings!

Observe, discriminating reader, that there is all the difference in the world between a *tradesman* and a *merchant;* and, moreover, that it is not every *tradesman* that is a Tagrag.

All these considerations combined to keep Tagrag in a perfect fever of doubt and anxiety, which several hearty curses failed in effectually relieving. By the time, however, that Titmouse had made his appearance, with a sufficiently sheepish air, and was beginning to run the gauntlet of grinning contempt from the choice youths on

each side of the shop, Tagrag had determined on the course he should pursue in the matter above referred to. To the amazement and disgust of all present, Tagrag bolted out of a little counting-house or side-room, hastened to meet Titmouse with out-stretched hand and cordial speech, drew him into his little room, and shut the door. There Tagrag informed his flurried young friend that he had made arrangements (with a little inconvenience, which signified nothing,) for lending Titmouse five pounds.

"And, as life's uncertain, my dear Mr. Titmouse," said Tagrag, as Titmouse, with evident ecstacy, put the five-pound note into his pocket—"even between the dearest friends—eh? Understand? It's not *you* I fear, nor you me, because we've confidence in each other. But if any thing should happen, those we leave behind us"—Here he took out of his desk an I. O. U. £5, ready drawn up and dated—"a mere slip—a word or two—is satisfaction to both of us."

"Oh yes, sir! yes, sir!—any thing!" said Titmouse; and hastily taking the pen proffered him, signed his name, on which Tagrag felt a little relieved. Lutestring was then summoned into the room, and then (not a little to his astonishment) addressed by his imperious employer. "Mr. Lutestring, you will have the goodness to see that Mr. Titmouse is treated by every person in my establishment with the utmost respect. Whoever treats this gentleman with the slightest disrespect, isn't any longer a servant of mine. D'ye hear me, Mr. Lutestring?" added Tagrag, sternly, observing a very significant glance of intense hatred which Lutestring directed towards Titmouse. "D'ye hear me, sir?"

"Oh, yes, sir! yes, sir!—your orders shall be attended to." And leaving the room, with a half-audible whistle of contempt, while a grin overspread his features, he had within five minutes filled the mind of every shopman in the establishment with feelings of mingled wonder, hatred, and fear towards Titmouse. What could have happened? What was Mr. Tagrag about? This was all of a piece with his rage at Lutestring the day before. "D——n Titmouse!" said or thought every one.

Titmouse, for the remainder of the day, felt, as may be

imagined, but little at his ease; for—to say nothing of his insuperable repugnance to the discharge of any of his former duties; his uneasiness under the oppressive civilities of Mr. Tagrag; and the evident disgust towards him entertained by his companions;—many most important considerations arising out of recent and coming events, were momentarily forcing themselves upon his attention. The first of these was his *hair;* for Heaven seemed to have suddenly given him the long-coveted means of changing its detested hue; and the next was—an *eyeglass*, without which, he had long felt his appearance and appointments to be painfully incomplete. Early in the afternoon, therefore, on the readily-admitted plea of important business, he obtained the permission of the obsequious Tagrag to depart for the day; and instantly directed his seps to the well known shop of a fashionable perfumer and perruquier, in Bond Street—well known to those at least, who were in the habit of glancing at the enticing advertisement in the newspapers. Having watched through the window till the coast was clear, (for he felt a natural delicacy in asking for a hair dye before people who could in an instant perceive his urgent occasion for it,) he entered the shop, where a well-dressed gentleman was sitting behind the counter, reading. He was handsome; and his elaborately curled hair was of a heavenly black (so at least Titmouse considered it) that was better than a thousand printed advertisements of the celebrated fluid which formed the chief commodity there vended. Titmouse, with a little hesitation, asked this gentleman what was the price of their article "for turning *light* hair black"—and was answered—"only seven and sixpence for the smaller-sized bottle." One was in a twinkling p'aced upon the counter—where it lay like a miniature mummy, swathed, as it were, in manifold advertisements. "You'll find the fullest directions within, and testimonials from the highest nobility to the wonderful efficacy of the 'CYANOCHAITANTHROPOPOION.'"*

* This fearful-looking word, I wish to inform my lady readers is a monstrous amalgamation of three or four Greek words—denoting a fluid "*that can render the human hair black.*" Whenever a barber or perfumer determines on trying to puff off some villanous imposition of this sort, strange to say, he goes to some starving scholar,

"*Sure* it will do, sir?" inquired Titmouse anxiously.

"Is *my* hair dark enough to your taste, sir?" said the gentleman, with a calm and bland manner, "because I owe it entirely to this invaluable specific."

"Do you indeed, sir?" inquired Titmouse: adding, with a sigh, "but between ourselves, look at mine!" and, lifting off his hat for a moment, he exhibited a great crop of bushy, carroty hair.

"Whew! rather ugly that, sir!" exclaimed the gentleman, looking very serious. "What a curse it is to be born with such hair; isn't it?"

"I should think so, sir," answered Titmouse, mournfully; "and do you really think, sir, that this what's-its-name turned yours of that beautiful black?"

"Think! 'Pon my honour, sir, certain; no mistake, I assure you! I was fretting myself into my grave about the colour of my hair! Why, sir, there was a nobleman here, (I don't like to mention names,) the other day, with a head that seemed as if it had been dipped into water, and then powdered with brick dust; but, I assure you, the Cyanochaitantropopoion was too much for it; it turned black in a very short time. You should have seen his lordship's ecstasy"—the speaker saw that Titmouse would swallow any thing; so he went on with a confidential air—"and in a month's time he had married a beautiful woman, whom he had loved from a child, but who never would marry a man with such a head of hair."

"How long does it take to do all this, sir?" interrupted Titmouse, eagerly, with a beating heart.

"Sometimes two, sometimes three days. In four days' time, I'll answer for it, your most intimate friend would not know you. My wife did not know me for a long while, and would'nt let me salute her—ha, ha!" Here another customer entered; and Titmouse, laying down the five pound note he had squeezed out of Tagrag, put the wonder-working phial into his pocket, and, on receiving his change, departed, bursting with eagerness to try the effects of the Cyanochaitantropopoion. Within

and gives him half-a-crown to coin a word like the above, that shall be equally unintelligible and unpronounceable, and therefore attractive and popular.

half an hour's time he might have been seen driving a hard bargain with a pawnbroker for a massive-looking eye glass, which, as it hung suspended in the window, he had for months cast a longing eye upon; and he eventually purchased it (his eyesight I need hardly say, was perfect) for only fifteen shillings. After taking a hearty dinner in a little dusky eating-house in Rupert Street, frequented by fashionable-looking foreigners, with splendid heads of curling hair and mustachios, he hastened home. Having lit his candle, and locked his door, with tremulous fingers he opened the papers enveloping the little phial; and glancing over their contents, got so inflamed with the numberless instances of its efficacy, detailed in brief and glowing terms—the "Duke of ——, the Countess of ——, the Earl of, &c. &c. &c. &c.—the lovely Miss ——, the celebrated Sir Little Bull's-eye, (who was so gratified that he allowed his name to be used)—all of whom, from having hair of the reddest possible description, were now possessed of ebon-hued locks"—that the cork was soon extracted from the bottle. Having turned up his coat-cuffs, he commenced the application of the Cyanochaitantropopoion, rubbing it into his hair, eyebrows and whiskers, with all the energy he was capable of, for upwards of half an hour. Then he read over every syllable on the papers in which the phial had been wrapped; and about eleven o'clock, having given sundry curious glances at the glass, got into bed, full of exciting hopes and delightful anxieties concerning the success of the great experiment he was trying. He could not sleep for several hours. He dreamed a rapturous dream—that he bowed to a gentleman with coal-black hair, whom he fancied he had seen before—and suddenly discovered that he was only looking at *himself* in a glass!!—This woke him. Up he jumped, and in a trice was standing before his little glass. Horrid! he almost dropped down dead! his hair was perfectly *green*—there could be no mistake about it. He stood staring in the glass in speechless horror, his eyes and mouth distended to their utmost, for several minutes. Then he threw himself on the bed, and felt fainting. Up he presently jumped again—rubbed his hair desperately and wildly about—again looking into the glass—there it was, rougher than before; but eyebrows,

whiskers and head—all were, if any thing, of a more vivid and brilliant green. Despair came over him. What had all his troubles been to this?—and what was to become of him? He got into bed again, and burst into a perspiration. Two or three times he got in and out of bed to look at himself again—on each occasion deriving only more terrible confirmation than before of the disaster that had befallen him. After lying still for some minutes, he got out of bed, and kneeling down, tried to pray; but it was in vain—and he rose half choked. It was plain he must have his head shaved, and wear a wig—that was making an old man of him at once. Getting more and more disturbed in his mind, he dressed himself, half determined on starting off to Bond Street, and breaking every pane of glass in the shop window of the cruel impostor who had sold him the liquid that had so frightfully disfigured him. As he stood thus irresolute, he heard the step of Mrs. Squallop approaching his door, and recollected that he had ordered her to bring up his tea-kettle about that time. Having no time to take his clothes off, he thought the best thing he could do would be to pop into bed again, draw his nightcap down to his ears and eyebrows, pretend to be asleep, and, turning his back towards the door, have a chance of escaping the observation of his landlady. No sooner thought of than done. Into bed he jumped, and drew the clothes over him—not aware, however, that in his hurry he had left his legs, with boots and trousers on, exposed to view—an unusual spectacle to his landlady, who had, in fact, scarcely ever known him in bed at so late an hour before. He lay as still as a mouse. Mrs. Squallop, after glancing at his legs, happening to direct her eyes towards the window, beheld a small phial, only half of whose dark contents were remaining—of course it was POISON. In a sudden fright she dropped the kettle, plucked the clothes off the trembling Titmouse, and cried out—"Oh, Mr. Titmouse! Mr. Titmouse! what have you been——"

"Well, ma'am, what the devil do you mean? How dare you"—commenced Titmouse, suddenly sitting up, and looking furiously at Mrs. Squallop. A pretty figure he was. He had all his day clothes on; a white cotton nightcap was drawn down to his very eyes, like a man

going to be hanged; his face was very pale, and his whiskers were of a bright green colour.

"Lord-a-mighty!" exclaimed Mrs. Squallop, faintly, the moment that this strange apparition presented itself; and, sinking on the chair, she pointed with a dismayed air to the ominous looking object standing on the window shelf. Titmouse from that supposed she had found it all out. "Well—*isn't* it a shame, Mrs. Squallop?" said he, getting off the bed, and, plucking off his nightcap, exhibited the full extent of his misfortune. "What d'ye think of that!" he exclaimed, staring wildly at her. Mrs. Squallop gave a faint shriek, turned her head aside, and motioned him away.

"I shall go mad—I shall——"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" groaned Mrs. Squallop, evidently expecting him to leap upon her. Presently, however, she a little recovered her presence of mind, and Titmouse, stuttering with fury, explained to her what had taken place. As he went on, Mrs. Squallop became less and less able to control herself, and at length burst into a fit of convulsive laughter, and sat holding her hands to her fat shaking sides, as if she would have tumbled off her chair. Titmouse was almost on the point of striking her! At length, however, the fit went off; and, wiping her eyes, she expressed the greatest commiseration for him, and proposed to go down and fetch up some soft soap and flannel, and try what "a good, hearty wash would do." Scarce sooner said than done—but, alas, in vain! Scrub, scrub—lather, lather, lather, did they both; but the instant the soap-suds were washed off, there was the head as green as ever.

"What *am* I to do, Mrs. Squallop?" groaned Titmouse, having taken another look at himself in the glass.

"Why, really, I'd be off to a police office, and have 'em all taken up, if as how I was *you*."

"No—see if I don't take that bottle, and make the fellow that sold it to me swallow what's left, and I'll smash in his shop front besides."

"Oh you won't—you musn't—not on no account! Stop at home a bit, and be quiet, it may go off with all this washing, in the course of the day. Soft soap is an uncommon strong thing for getting colours out—but—a

—a—excuse me, Mr. Titmouse—why wasn't you satisfied with the hair God Almighty had given you? D'ye think he didn't know a deal better than you what was best for you? I'm blest if I don't think this a judgment on you."

"What's the use of your standing preaching to me in this way, Mrs. Squallop? Ain't I half mad without it? Judgment or no judgment—where's the harm of my wanting black hair any more than black trousers? That ain't *your own* hair, Mrs. Squallop—you're as gray as a badger underneath—I've often remarked it."

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Himperance!" furiously exclaimed Mrs. Squallop, "you're a liar? And you deserve what you've got! It *is* a judgment, and I hope it will stick by you—so take *that* for your sauce, you vulgar fellow! Get rid of your green hair if you can! It's only carrot *tops* instead of carrot *roots*—and some like one, some the other—ha! ha! ha!"

"I'll tell you what, Mrs. Squ—" he commenced, but she had gone, having slammed to the door behind her with all her force; and Titmouse was left alone in a half frantic state, in which he continued for nearly two hours. Once again he read over the atrocious puffs which had overnight inflated him to such a degree, and he now saw that they were all lies. This is a sample of them:

"This divine fluid, (as it was enthusiastically styled to the inventor, by the lovely Duchess of Doodle) possesses the inestimable and astonishing quality of changing hair, of whatever colour, to a dazzling jet black; at the same time imparting to it a rich glossy appearance, which wonderfully contributes to the imposing *tout ensemble* presented by those who use it. That well known ornament of the circle of fashion, the young and lovely Mrs. Fitzfrippery, owned to the proprietor, that to this surprising fluid it was that she was indebted for those unrivalled raven ringlets, which attracted the eyes of envying and admiring crowds," and so forth. A little farther on:

"This exquisite effect is not *in all cases* produced instantaneously; much will of course depend (as the celebrated M. Dupuyten, of the Hotel Dieu, at Paris, informed the inventor,) on the physical idiosyncrasy of the party using it, with reference to the constituent particles of the

colouring matter, constituting the fluid in the capillary vessels. Often a single application suffices to change the most hopeless-looking head of red hair to as a deep a black: but, not unfrequently, the hair *passes through intermediate shades and tints;* all, however, ultimately settling into a deep and permanent black."

This passage not a little revived the drooping spirits of Titmouse. Accidentally, however, an asterisk at the last word in the above sentence, directed his eye to a note at the bottom of the page, printed in such minute type as baffled any but the strongest sight and most determined eye to read, and which said note was the following:

"Though cases *do*, undoubtedly, occasionally occur, in which the native inherent indestructible qualities of the hair defy all attempts at change or even modification, and resist even *this* potent remedy: of which, however, in all his experience" (the specific had been invented for about *six months*) "the inventor has known but very few instances." But to this exceedingly select class of unfortunate incurables, poor Titmouse entertained a dismal suspicion that he belonged.

"Look, sir! look! Only look here what your stuff has done to my hair!" said Titmouse, on presenting himself soon after to the gentleman who had sold him the infernal liquid; and, taking off his hat, exposed his green hair. The gentleman, however, did not appear at all surprised or discomposed."

"Ah, yes! I see, I see. You're in the intermediate stage. It differs in different people."

"Differs, sir! I'm going mad! I look like a green monkey."

"In *me*, the colour was strong *yellow*. But have you read the descriptions that are given in the wrapper?"

"I should think so! Much good they do *me!* Sir, you're a humbug!—an impostor! I'm a sight to be seen for the rest of my life! Look at me, sir! Eyebrows, whiskers, and all."

"*Rather* a singular appearance, just at present, I must own," said the gentleman, his face turning suddenly red all over, with the violent effort he was making to prevent an explosion of laughter. He soon, however, recovered himself, and added coolly, "if you'll only persevere."

"Persevere!" interrupted Titmouse, violently, clapping his hat on his head, "I'll teach you to *persevere* in taking in the public. I'll have a warrant out against you."

"Oh, my dear sir, I'm accustomed to all this!"

"The—devil—you—are!" gasped Titmouse, quite aghast.

"Oh, often—often, while the liquid is performing the first stage of the change: but in a day or two afterwards, the parties generally come back smiling into my shop with heads as black as crows."

"No! But really do they, sir?" interrupted Titmouse, drawing a long breath.

"Hundreds, I may say thousands, my dear sir! And one lady gave me a picture of herself, in her black hair, to make up for her abuse of me when it was in a puce colour."

"But do you recollect any one's hair turning *green*, and then getting black?" inquired Titmouse, with trembling anxiety.

"Recollect any! Fifty, at least. For instance, there was Lord Albert Addlehead;—but why should I name names? I know hundreds! But every thing is honour and confidential *here!*"

"And did Lord What's-his-name's hair go green, and then black? and was it at first as light as mine?"

"His hair was redder, and in consequence it became greener, and now is blacker than ever your's will be."

"Well, if I and my landlady have this morning used an ounce, we've used a quarter of a pound of soft soap in——"

"Soft soap!—soft soap! That explains all." He forgot how well it had been already explained by him. "By heavens, sir!—soft soap! You may have ruined your hair for ever!" Titmouse opened his eyes and mouth with a start of terror, it not occurring to him that the intolerable green had preceded and caused, not followed, the use of the soft soap. "Go home, my dear sir! God bless you—go home, as you value your hair; take this small bottle of Damascus cream, and rub it in before it's too late; and then use the remainder of the——"

"Then you don't think it's too late?" inquired Titmouse, faintly; and having been assured to the contrary

—having asked the price of the Damascus cream, which was only three-and-sixpence (stamp included)—he paid it with a rueful air, and took his departure. He sneaked along the streets, with the air of a pickpocket fearful that every one he met was an officer who had his eye on him. He was not, in fact, very far off the mark; for many a person smiled, and stared, and turned round to look at him as he went along.

I wonder, now, what effect the perusal of these pages must have upon the reader, gentle or simple, young or old, male or female, who has shared the folly of Titmouse in the particular now under consideration? They cannot help laughing at the trouble of Titmouse; but it is accompanied by a *blush* at the absurd weakness of which themselves have been guilty. Depend upon it, my gentleman, that every man or woman of sense who sees you, and suspects or knows what you have been about, can scarce help bursting out a-laughing at you, and writes you down ever after—ASS. But if they do this on seeing him who has so weakly attempted to disguise red-coloured hair, what sorrow, mingled with contempt, must they feel when they see a man, or woman, ashamed of—GRAY HAIRS—a "crown of rejoicing to them that have done well," a mark of one to whom God has given long life, as the means of gathering experience and wisdom—and dishonouring those gray hairs by the desperate folly of Tittlebat Titmouse?

Titmouse slunk up stairs to his room, in a sad state of depression, and spent the next hour in rubbing into his hair the Damascus cream. He rubbed till he could hardly hold his arms up any longer from sheer fatigue. Having risen, at length, to mark, from the glass, the progress he had made, he found that the only result of his persevering exertions had been to give a greasy shining appearance to the hair, that remained as green as ever. With a half-uttered groan he sunk down upon a chair, and fell into a sort of abstraction, which was interrupted by a sharp knock at his door. Titmouse started up, trembled, and stood for a moment or two irresolute, glancing fearfully at the glass; and then opening the door, let in Mr. Gammon, who started back a pace or two, as if he had been shot, on catching sight of the strange figure of Tit-

mouse. It was useless for Gammon to try to check his laughter; so, leaning against the door-post, he yielded to the impulse, and laughed without intermission for at least two minutes. Titmouse felt desperately angry, but feared to show it; and the timid, rueful, lackadaisical air with which he regarded the dreaded Mr. Gammon, only prolonged and aggravated the agonies of that gentleman. When at length he had a little recovered himself, holding his left hand to his side, with an exhausted air, he entered the little apartment, and asked Titmouse what in the name of heaven he had been doing to himself. "*Without this*" (in the absurd slang of the lawyers) that he knew all the while quite well what Titmouse had been about; but he wanted the enjoyment of hearing Titmouse's own account of the matter. Titmouse, not daring to hesitate, complied —Gammon listening in an agony of suppressed laughter, all the while seeming on the point of bursting a blood-vessel. He looked as little at Titmouse as he could, and was growing a little more sedate, when Titmouse, in a truly lamentable tone, inquired, "What's the good, Mr. Gammon, of ten thousand a-year with such a head of hair as this?" On hearing which Gammon jumped off his chair, started to the window, and such an explosion of laughter followed as threatened to crack the panes of glass before him. This was too much for Titmouse, who presently cried aloud in a grievous manner; and Gammon, suddenly ceasing his laughter, turned round and apologized in the most earnest manner; after which he uttered an abundance of sympathy for the sufferings which "he deplored being unable to alleviate." He even restrained himself when Titmouse again and again asked him if he could not "have the law" of the man who had so imposed on him. Gammon diverted the thoughts of his suffering client, by taking from his pocket some very imposing packages of paper, tied round with red tape. From time to time, however, he almost split his nose with efforts to restrain his laughter, on catching a fresh glimpse of poor Titmouse's emerald hair.

Gammon was a man of business, however; and in the midst of all this distracting excitement, contrived to get Titmouse's signature to sundry papers of no little consequence; amongst others, first, to a bond conditioned for

the payment of £500; secondly, another for £10,000; and, lastly, an agreement (of which he gave Titmouse an alleged copy) by which Titmouse, in consideration of Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap, using their best exertions to put him in the possession of the estate, &c. &c., bound himself to conform to their wishes in every thing, on pain of their instantly throwing up the whole affair, looking out for another heir-at-law, and issuing execution forthwith against Titmouse for all expenses incurred under his retainer. I said that Gammon gave his confiding client an *alleged* copy of agreement:—it was not a real copy, for certain stipulations appeared in each that were not intended to appear *in* the other, for reasons which were perfectly satisfactory to Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap. When Gammon had got to this point, he thought it the fitting opportunity for producing a second five-pound note. He did so, and put Titmouse thereby into an ecstacy which pushed out of his head for a while all recollection of what had happened to his hair. He had at that moment nearly eleven pounds in hard cash! Gammon easily obtained from him an account of his little money transactions with Huckaback—of which, however, all he could tell was—that for ten shillings down, he had given a written engagement to pay fifty pounds on getting the estate. Of this Gammon made a careful memorandum, explaining the atrocious villany of Huckaback—and, in short, that if he (Titmouse) did not look very sharply about him, he would be robbed right and left; so that it was of the utmost consequence to him early to learn how to distinguish between false and true friends. Gammon went on to assure him that the instrument he had given to Huckaback was, probably, in point of law, not worth a farthing, on the ground of its being both fraudulent and usurious; and intimated something, which Titmouse did not very distinctly comprehend, about the efficacy of a bill in equity for a *discovery;* which, at a very insignificant expense, (not exceeding £100,) would oblige the plaintiff in equity (*i. e.* Huckaback), by the way of declaring, to give his solemn oath that he had advanced the full sum of £50: and having obtained this important and satisfactory result, Titmouse would have the opportunity of disproving the statement of Huckaback—*if he could;*

which of course he could not. By this process, however, a little profitable employment would have been afforded to a certain distinguished firm in Saffron Hill—and that was *something*—to Gammon.

"But, by the way, talking about money," said Titmouse, suddenly, "how surprising handsome Mr. Tagrag has behaved to me!"

"Indeed, my dear sir!" exclaimed Gammon, with real curiosity, "what has he done?"

"Advanced me five pounds—all of his own head!"

"Are you serious, Mr. Titmouse?" inquired Gammon.

Titmouse produced the change which he had obtained for Tagrag's five pound note, minus only the prices of the Cyanochaitantropopoion, the Damascus Cream, and the eye-glass. Gammon merely stroked his chin in a thoughtful manner. So occupied, indeed, was he with his reflections, that though his eye was fixed on the ludicrous figure of Titmouse, which so shortly before had occasioned him such paroxysms of laughter, he did not feel the least inclination even to a smile. Tagrag advanced Titmouse five pounds! Throwing as much smiling indifference into his manner as was possible, he asked Titmouse the particulars of so strange a transaction. Titmouse answered (how truly the reader can judge) that Mr. Tagrag had, in the very handsomest way, volunteered the loan of five pounds; and moreover offered him any further sum he might require!

"What a charming change, Mr. Titmouse!" exclaimed Gammon, with a watchful eye and anxious smile.

"Most delightful!"

"Rather sudden, too!—eh?—Mr. Titmouse?"

"Why—no—no; I should say 'pon my life, certainly not. The fact is, we've long misunderstood each other. He's had an uncommon good opinion of me all the while—people *have* tried to set him against me; but it's no use, he's found them out—he told me so! And he's not only said, but *done* the handsome thing! He's turned up, by Jove, a trump all of a sudden—though it long looked an ugly one."

"Ha, ha, ha!—very!—how curious!" exclaimed Mr. Gammon, mechanically revolving several important matters in his mind.

"I'm going, too, to dine at Satin Lodge, Mr. Tagrag's country house, next Sunday."

"Indeed! It will be quite a change for you, Mr. Titmouse."

"Yes, it will, by Jove; and—a—a—what's more—there's—hem!—you understand?"

"Go on, I beg, my dear Mr. Titmouse."

"There's a lady in the case—not that she's *said* any thing; but a nod's as good as a wink to a blind horse—eh? Mr. Gammon?"

"I should think so—Miss Tagrag will have money, of course?"

"You've hit it! Lots! But I've not made up my mind."

"I'd better undeceive this poor devil at once, as to this sordid wretch Tagrag," thought Gammon, "otherwise the cunning old rogue may get a very mischievous hold upon him! And a *lady in the case!* The old scamp has a daughter! Whew! this will never do! The sooner I enlighten my young friend the better—though at a little risk."

"It's very important to be able to tell who are real and who are false friends, as I was saying just now, my dear Titmouse," said Gammon, seriously.

"I think so. Now look, for instance, there's that fellow Huckaback. I should say he——"

"Pho! pho! my dear sir, a mere beetle—he's not worth thinking of, one way or the other. But, can't you guess another sham friend, who has changed so suddenly."

"Do you mean Mr. Tagrag—eh?"

"I mention no names; but it's rather odd, that when I am speaking of hollow-hearted friends, *you* should at once name Mr. Tagrag."

"The proof of the pudding—handsome is that handsome does; and I've got £5 of his money, at any rate."

"Of course, he took no security for such a trifle, between such close friends as you and him?"

"Oh—why—now you mention it—but, 'twas only a line—one line."

"I knew it, my dear sir," interrupted Gammon, calmly, with a significant smile—"Tagrag and Huckaback,

they're on a par—ah, ha, ha!" My dear Titmouse, you are too honest and confiding!"

"What keen eyes you lawyers have, to be sure! Well—I never"—he was evidently somewhat staggered.—"I—I—must say," he presently added, looking gratefully at Gammon, "I think I *do* now know of a true friend, that sent me two five pound notes, and never asked for any security."

"My dear sir, you really pain me by alluding to such a matter!"

Oh, Gammon, is not this too bad? What are the papers which you know are now in your pockets, signed only this very evening by Titmouse?

"You are not a match for Tagrag, Titmouse; because he was *made* for a tradesman—you are not. Do you think he would have parted with his £5 but for value received? Oh, Tagrag! Tagrag!"

"I—I really begin to think, Mr. Gammon—'pon my soul, I do think you're right."

"Think!—Why—for a man of your acuteness—how could he imagine you could forget the long course of insult and tyranny; that he should change all of a sudden—just now, when——"

"Ay—by Jove!—just when I'm coming into my property," interrupted Titmouse, quickly.

"To be sure—to be sure!—Just now, I say, to make this sudden change! Bah! bah!"

"I hate Tagrag, and always did. Now, he's trying to take me in, just as he does every body; but I've found him out—I won't lay out a penny with him."

"Would you, do you think, ever have seen the inside of Satin Lodge, if you hadn't——"

"Why, I don't know—I really think—hem!"

"*Were* you, my dear sir?—But now a scheme occurs to me—a very amusing idea. Shall I tell you a way of proving to his own face how insincere and interested he is towards you? Go to dinner by all means, eat his good things, hear all that the whole set of them have to say, and just before you go, (it will require you to have all your wits about you,) pretend, with a long face, that our affair is all a bottle of smoke: say that Messrs. Quirk,

Gammon, and Snap, have told you the day before that they had made a horrid mistake."

"'Pon my life, I—I—really—daren't—I couldn't—I couldn't keep it up—he'd half kill me. Besides, there will be Miss Tagrag, it would be the death of her, I know."

"Miss Tagrag! Gracious heavens! What on earth can you have to do with *her?* *You*—why, if you really succeed in getting this fine property, she might make a very suitable wife for one of your grooms."

"Ah! I don't know—she may be a devilish fine girl, and the old fellow will have a tolerable penny to leave her—and a bird in the hand—eh? Besides I know what she's all along—hem!—but that doesn't signify."

"Pho! pho! Ridiculous! Ha, ha, ha! Fancy Miss Tagrag Mrs. Titmouse! Your eldest son—ah, ha, ha! Tagrag Titmouse, Esq. Delightful. Your honoured father a draper in Oxford Street!" All this might be very clever, but it did not seem to *tell* upon Titmouse, whose little heart had been reached by a cunning hint of Tagrag's, concerning his daughter's flattering estimate of Titmouse's personal appearanee. The reason why Gammon attacked so seriously a matter which appeared so chimerical and preposterous, was this—that, according to his present plan, Titmouse was to remain for some considerable while at Tagrag's, and with his utter weakness of character, might be worked upon by Tagrag and his daughter, and get inveigled into an engagement which might be productive hereafter of no little embarrassment. He succeeded, however, at length, in obtaining Titmouse's promise to adopt his suggestion, and thereby discover the true nature of the feelings entertained towards him at Satin Lodge. He shook Titmouse energetically by the hand, and left him perfectly certain, that if there was one person in the world worthy of his esteem, and even reverence, that person was Oily Gammon, Esq.

As he bent his steps towards Saffron Hill, he reflected rather anxiously on several matters that had occurred to him during the interview which I have just described. On reaching the office, he was presently closeted with Mr. Quirk, to whom, first and foremost, he exhibited and delivered the documents to which he had obtained Titmouse's signature, and which, the reader will allow me to

assure him, were of a somewhat different texture from a certain legal instrument or security which I laid before him some little time ago.

"Now, Gammon," said the old gentleman, as soon as he had locked up in his safe the above-mentioned documents—"Now, Gammon, I think we may be up and at 'em; load our guns, and blaze away," and he rubbed his hands.

"Yes, and long enough we've been in preparation? But I just want to name a thing or two that has occurred to me while with Titmouse." Then he told him of the effects which had followed the use of the potent Cyanochaitanthropopoion, at which old Quirk almost laughed himself into fits. When, however, Gammon, with a serious air, mentioned the name of Miss Tagrag, and his grave suspicions concerning her, Quirk bounced up out of his chair, almost startling Gammon out of *his*. If he had just been told that his banker had broke, he could scarce have shown more emotion.

The fact was, that he, too, had a DAUGHTER—an only child—Miss Quirk—whom he had destined to become Mrs. Titmouse.

"A designing old villain!" he exclaimed at length; and Gammon agreed with him; but, strange to say, with all his acuteness, never adverted to the real cause of Quirk's sudden and vehement exclamation. When Gammon told him of the manner in which he had opened Titmouse's eyes to the knavery of Tagrag, and the expedient he had suggested for its demonstration, Quirk could have worshipped Gammon, and could not help rising and shaking him energetically by the hand, much to his astonishment. After a long consultation, two things were agreed upon by the partners; to look out fresh lodgings for Titmouse, and remove him presently altogether from the company and influence of Tagrag. Some time after they had parted, Quirk came with an eager air into Mr. Gammon's room, with a most important suggestion, viz., whether it would not be possible for them to get Tagrag to *become a surety* to them, by and by, on behalf of Titmouse! Gammon was delighted! He heartily commended Mr. Quirk's sagacity, and promised to turn it about in his thoughts very carefully. Not having been let entirely into Quirk's

policy, (of which the reader has, however, just had a glimpse,) he did not see the difficulties which kept Quirk awake almost all that night—how to protect Titmouse from the machinations of Tagrag and his daughter, and yet keep Tagrag sufficiently interested in, and intimate with Titmouse, to entertain, by and by, the idea of becoming surety for him to them, the said Messrs. Quirk, Gammon, and Snap; and how to manage Titmouse all the while, so as to forward their objects, and also that of turning his attention towards Miss Quirk, was really a rather difficult problem. Quirk looked down on Tagrag with honest indignation, as a mean and mercenary fellow, whose unprincipled schemes, thank Heaven! he already saw through, and from which he determined to rescue his innocent and confiding client, who was made for better things—*to wit, Miss Quirk.*

When Titmouse rose the next morning, (Saturday,) behold — he found his hair had become of a variously shaded purple or violet colour! Astonishment and apprehension by turns possessed him, as he stared into the glass, at this unlooked for change of colour; and hastily dressing himself, after swallowing a very slight breakfast, off he went once more to the scientific establishment in Bond Street, to which he had been indebted for his recent delightful experiences. The distinguished inventor and proprietor of the Cyanochaitanthropopoion was behind the counter as usual—calm and confident as ever.

"Ah! I see—as I said! as I said! isn't it?—coming round quicker than usual—really, I'm selling more of the article than I can possibly make."

"Well,"—at length said Titmouse, as soon as he had recovered from the surprise occasioned by the sudden volubility with which he had been assailed on entering—"then *is* it really going on tolerable well?" taking off his hat and looking anxiously into a glass that hung close by.

"*Tolerable* well! delightful! perfect! couldn't be better! If you'd studied the thing, you'd know, sir, that purple is the middle colour between green and black. Indeed, black is only purple and green mixed, which explains the whole thing!"

Titmouse listened with infinite satisfaction to this philosophical statement.

"Remember, sir, my hair is to come like yours—eh? you recollect, sir?"

"I have very little doubt of it, sir—nay, I am certain of it, knowing it by experience."

The scamp had been hired expressly for the purpose of lying thus in support of the Cyanochaitanthropoion; his own hair being a natural black.

"I am going to a grand dinner, to-morrow, sir," said Titmouse, "with some devilish great people at the west end of the town—eh? you understand? will it do by that time? Would give a trifle to get my hair a shade darker by that time—for—hem!—most lovely girl—eh? you understand the thing! devilish anxious and all that sort of thing, you know!"

"Yes—I do," replied the gentleman of the shop, in a confidential tone; and opening one of the glass doors behind him, took out a bottle considerably larger than the first, and handed it to Titmouse. "This," said he, "will complete the thing; it combines chemically with the purple particles, and the result is—generally arrived at in about two days' time——"

"But it will do *something* in a night's time—eh?—surely."

"I should think so! But here it is—it is called the Tetaragmenon Abracadabra."

"What a name!" exclaimed Titmouse, with a kind of awe. "'Pon honour, it almost takes one's breath away—"

"It will do more, sir—it will take your red hair away! By the way, only the day before yesterday, a lady of high rank, (between ourselves Lady Caroline Carrot,) whose red hair always seemed as if it would have set her bonnet in a blaze, came here, after two days use of the Cyanochaitanthropopoion, and one day's use of this Tetaragmenon Abracadabra—and asked me if I knew her. Upon my soul I did not, till she solemnly assured me that she was really Lady Caroline!"

"How much is it!" eagerly inquired Titmouse, thrusting his hand into his pocket, with no little excitement.

"Only nine-and-sixpence."

"Good gracious, what a price!—nine-and-six——"

"Would you believe it, sir? This extraordinary fluid cost a distinguished German chemist his whole life to

bring to perfection; and it contains expensive materials from all the four corners of the world."

"I've laid out a large figure with you, sir, this day or two—couldn't you say eight sh——"

"We never abate, sir," said the gentleman, rather haughtily. Of course poor Titmouse bought the thing; not a little depressed, however, at the heavy prices he had paid for the three bottles, and the uncertainty he felt as to the ultimate issue. That night, he was so well satisfied with the progress which the hair on his head was making, (for by candle-light it really looked very dark,) that he resolved—at all events for the present—to leave well alone; or, at the utmost, to try the effects of the Tetaragmenon Abracadabra only upon his eye-brows and whiskers. Into them he rubbed the new specific; which, on the bottle being opened, surprised him in two respects: —first, it was perfectly colourless; secondly, it had a most infernal smell. However, it was no use hesitating; he had bought and paid for it; and the papers it was folded in gave an account of its success, which was really irresistible and unquestionable. Away, therefore, he rubbed —and when he had finished, got into bed, in humble hope as to the result, which would be disclosed by the morning's light! But would you believe it? When he looked at himself in the glass about six o'clock, (at which hour he awoke,) I protest it as a fact, that his eyebrows and whiskers were as white as snow; which, combining with the purple colour of the hair on his head, rendered him one of the most astounding objects (in human shape) the eye of man had ever beheld. There was the wisdom of age seated in his eyebrows and whiskers, unspeakable folly in his features, and a purple crown of WONDER on his head.

Really, it seemed as if the devil were wreaking his spite on Mr. Titmouse!—nay, perhaps it was the devil himself who had served him with the bottles in Bond Street. Or was it a mere ordinary servant of the devil—some greedy, impudent, unprincipled speculator, who, desirous of acting on the approved maxim—*Fiat experimentum in corpore vili*—had pitched on Titmouse (seeing the sort of person he was) as a godsend, quite reckless what effect he produced on his hair, so as the stuff was paid for, and its effects noted? It might possibly have been sport to the

gentleman of the shop, but it was near proving death to poor Titmouse, who really might have resolved on throwing himself out of the window, only that he saw it was not big enough for a baby to get through. He turned aghast at the monstrous object which his little glass presented to him; and sunk down upon the bed with a feeling as if he were now fit for death. As before, Mrs. Squallop made her appearance with his kettle for breakfast. He was sitting at the table, dressed, and with his arms folded, with a reckless air, not at all caring to conceal the new and still more frightful change which he had undergone since she saw him last. Mrs. Squallop stared at him for a second or two in silence; then stepping back out of the room, suddenly drew to the door, and stood outside, laughing vehemently.

"I'll kick you down stairs!" shouted Titmouse, rushing to the door, pale with fury, and pulling it open.

"Mr.—Mr.—Titmouse, you'll be the death of me—you will—you will!" gasped Mrs. Squallop, almost black in the face, and the water running out of the kettle, which she was unconsciously holding in a slant. After a while, however, they got reconciled. Mrs. Squallop had fancied he had been but rubbing chalk on his eyebrows and whiskers; and seemed dismayed indeed, on hearing the true state of the case. He implored her to send out for a small bottle of ink; but as it was Sunday morning, none could be got—and she teased him to try a little blacking! He did; but of course it was useless. He sat for an hour or two in an ecstasy of grief and rage. What would he now have given never to have meddled with the hair which God had thought fit to send him into the world with? Alas! with what mournful force Mrs. Squallop's words again and again recurred to him! To say that he eat breakfast, would be scarcely correct. He drank a single cup of cocoa, and eat about three inches length and thickness of a roll, and then put away his breakfast things on the window-shelf. If he had been in the humour to go to church, how could he? he would have been turned out as an object involuntarily exciting every body to laughter.

Yet, poor soul, in this extremity of misery, he was not utterly neglected; for he had that morning quite a little levee. First came Mr. Snap, who, having quite as keen

and clear an eye for his own interest as his senior partners, had early seen how capable was acquaintance with Titmouse of being turned to his (Snap's) great advantage. He had come, therefore, dressed very stylishly, to do a little bit of toadying on the sly, (on his own exclusive account,) and had brought with him, for the edification of Titmouse, a copy of that day's *Sunday Flash*, which contained a long account of a bloody fight between Birmingham Bigbones and London Littlego, for £500 a side—eighty rounds were fought, both men killed, and their seconds had bolted to Boulogne. Poor Snap, however, though he had come with the best intentions, and the most anxious wish to evince profound respect for the future master of ten thousand a year, was quite taken by storm by the very first glimpse he got of Titmouse, and could not for a long while recover himself. He had come to ask Titmouse to dine with him at a tavern in the Strand, where there was to be capital singing in the evening; and also to accompany him, on the ensuing morning, to the Old Bailey, to hear "a most interesting trial" for bigamy, in which Snap was concerned for the prisoner—a miscreant who had been married to five living women. Snap conceived—and very justly—that it would give Titmouse a striking idea of his (Snap's) importance, to see him so much, and apparently so familiarly concerned with well known counsel. In his own terse and quaint way, he was explaining to Titmouse the various remedies he had against the Bond Street impostor, both by indictment and action on the case; nay, (getting a little, however, beyond his depth,) he assured the eager Titmouse, that a bill of discovery would lie in equity, to ascertain what the Tetaragmenon Abracadabra was composed of, with a view to an indictment against the owner, when his learned display was interrupted by a double knock, and—oh!—enter Mr. Gammon! Whether he or Snap felt more disconcerted, I cannot say; but Snap *looked* the most confused and sneaking. Each told the other a lie, in as easy, good-natured a way as he could assume, concerning the object of his visit to Mr. Titmouse. Thus they were going on, when—another knock—and, "Is this Mr. Titmouse's?" inquired a voice, which brought a little colour into the face of both Gammon and Snap; for it was absolutely old

Quirk, who bustled breathless into the room, on his first visit, and seemed completely confounded by the sight of both his partners. What, with this, and the amazing appearance presented by Titmouse, Mr. Quirk was so overwhelmed, that he scarce spoke a syllable. Each of the three partners felt (in his own way) exquisite embarrassment. Huckaback some time afterwards made his appearance, but *him* Titmouse unceremoniously dismissed in a twinkling, in spite of a vehement remonstrance. But presently behold another arrival—Mr. Tagrag, who had come to announce that his carriage, (*i. e.* a queer, rickety, little one-horse chaise, with a tallow-faced boy in it, in faded livery,) was waiting to convey Mr. Titmouse to Satin Lodge, and take him a long drive in the country! Each of these four worthies could have spit in the other's face; first, for *detecting*, and secondly, for *rivalling* him in his schemes upon Titmouse. A few minutes after the arrival of Tagrag, Gammon, half choked with disgust, and despising himself even more than his fellow-visiters, slunk off, followed almost immediately by Quirk, who was dying to consult him on this new aspect of affairs which had presented itself. Snap (who ever since the arrival of Messrs. Quirk and Gammon, had felt like an ape in hot irons) very shortly followed in the footsteps of his partners, having made no engagement whatever with Titmouse; and thus the enterprising and determined Tagrag was left master of the field. He had, in fact, come to do business; and business he determined to do. As for Gammon, during the short time he had stayed, how he had endeared himself to Titmouse, by explaining, not aware that Titmouse had confessed all to Snap, the singular change in the colour of his hair to have been occasioned by the intense mental anxiety through which he had lately passed! The anecdotes he told of sufferers, whose hair a single night's agony had changed to all the colours of the rainbow! Though Tagrag out-stayed all his fellow-visiters, in the manner which has been described, he could not prevail upon Titmouse to accompany him in his "carriage," for Titmouse pleaded a pressing engagement, (*i. e.* a desperate attempt he purposed making to obtain some *ink*,) but pledged himself to make his appearance at Satin Lodge at the appointed hour—half-past three

or four o'clock. Away, therefore, drove Tagrag, delighted that Satin Lodge would so soon contain so resplendent a visiter—indignant at the cringing, sycophantic attentions of Messrs. Quirk, and Gammon, and Snap, against whom he resolved to put Titmouse on his guard, and infinitely astonished at the extraordinary change that had taken place in the colour of Titmouse's hair. Partly influenced by the explanation which Gammon had given of the phenomenon, Tagrag resigned himself to feelings of simple wonder. Titmouse was doubtless passing through stages of physical transmogrification, corresponding with the marvellous change that was taking place in his circumstances; and for all he (Tagrag) knew, other and more extraordinary changes were going on; Titmouse might be growing at the rate of an half-inch a-day, and soon stand before him a man more than six feet high! Considerations such as these, invested Titmouse with intense and overpowering interest in the estimation of Tagrag; *how* could he make enough of him at Satin Lodge that day? If ever that hardened sinner felt inclined to utter an inward prayer, it was as he drove home —that heaven would array his daughter in angel hues to the eyes of Titmouse!

My friend Tittlebat made his appearance at the gate of Satin Lodge, at about a quarter to four o'clock. Good gracious, how he had dressed himself out! He considerably exceeded his appearance when first presented to the reader.

Miss Tagrag had been before her glass ever since the instant of her return from chapel, up to within ten minutes' time of Titmouse's arrival. An hour and a half at least had she bestowed on her hair, disposing it in little corkscrew and somewhat scanty curls, that quite glistened in bear's grease, hanging on each side of a pair of lean and sallow cheeks. The colour which ought to have distributed itself over her cheeks, in roseate delicacy, had thought fit to collect itself into the tip of her sharp little nose. Her small gray eyes beamed with the gentle and attractive expression that was perceptible in her father's, and her projecting under lip reminded every body of that delicate feature in her mother. She was very short, and her figure rather skinny and angular. She wore her lilac-

coloured frock; her waist being pinched in to a degree that made you think of a fit of the colic when you looked at her. A long red sash, tied in a most elaborate bow, gave a very brilliant air to her dress generally. She had a thin gold chain round her neck, and wore long white gloves; her left hand holding a pocket-handkerchief, which she had suffused with bergamotte that scented the whole room. Mrs. Tagrag had made herself very splendid, in a red silk gown and staring head-dress. As for Mr. Tagrag, whenever he was dressed in his Sunday clothes, he looked the model of a dissenting minister: in his black coat, waistcoat, and trousers, and primly tied white neckerchief, with no shirt-collar visible. For a quarter of an hour had this interesting trio been standing at their parlour window, in anxious expectation of Titmouse's arrival; their only amusement being the numberless dusty stage-coaches driving every five minutes close past their gate, (which was about ten yards from their house,) at once enlivening and ruralizing the scene. Oh, that poor laburnum—laden with dust, drooping with drought, and evidently in the very last stage of a decline —that was planted beside the little gate! Tagrag spoke of cutting it down; but Mrs. and Miss Tagrag begged its life a little longer—then *that* subject dropped. How was it that, though both the ladies had sat under a thundering discourse from Mr. Dismal Horror that morning—they had never once since thought or spoke of him or his sermon —never even opened his "*Groans*." The reason was plain. They thought of Titmouse, who was bringing "airs from heaven;" while Horror brought only "blasts from hell"—and *those* they had every day in the week, his sermons on the Sunday, his "*Groans* on the week-day. At length Miss Tagrag's little heart fluttered violently, for her papa told her that Titmouse was coming up the road—and so he was. Not dreaming that he could be seen, he stood beside the gate for a moment, under the melancholy laburnum; and, taking a dirty-looking silk handkerchief out of his hat, slapped it vigorously about his boots, (from which circumstance it may be inferred that he had walked,) and replaced it in his hat. Then he unbuttoned his surtout, adjusted it nicely, and disposed his chain and eyeglass just so as to let the tip only of the

latter be seen peeping out of his waistcoat; twitched up his collar, plucked down his wrist-bands, drew the tip of a white pocket-handkerchief out of the pocket in the breast of his surtout, pulled a white glove half-way on his left hand; and, having thus given the finishing touches to his toilet, opened the gate, and—Tittlebat Titmouse, Esquire, the great guest of the day, for the first time in his life (swinging a little ebony cane about with careless grace) entered the domain of Mr. Tagrag.

The little performance I have been describing, though every bit of it passing under the eyes of Tagrag, his wife, and his daughter, had not excited a smile; their anxious feelings were too deep to be reached or stirred by light emotions. Miss Tagrag turned very pale and trembled.

"La, pa," said she faintly, how could you say he'd got white eyebrows and whiskers? They're a beautiful black."

Tagrag was speechless: the fact was so—for Titmouse had fortunately obtained a little bottle of ink. As Titmouse approached the house, (Tagrag hurrying out to open the door for him,) he saw the two ladies standing at the windows. Off went his hat, and out dropped the silk handkerchief, not a little disconcerting him for the moment. Tagrag, however, soon occupied his attention at the door with anxious civilities, shaking him by the hand, hanging up his hat and stick, and then introducing him to the sitting-room. The ladies received him with most profound courtesies, which Titmouse returned with a quick embarrassed bow, and an indistinct—"I hope you're well, mem!"

If they had had presence of mind enough to observe it, the purple colour of Titmouse's hair must have surprised them not a little; all they could see, however, was—the angelic owner of ten thousand a-year.

The only person tolerably at his ease, and he *only* tolerably, was Mr. Tagrag;—and he asked his guest—

"Wash your hands, Titmouse, before dinner?" But Titmouse said he had washed them before he had come out. The day was hot, and he had walked five miles at a slapping pace. In a few minutes, however, he felt a little more assured; for it was impossible for him not to perceive the awful deference with which he was treated.

"Seen the *Sunday Flash*, mem?" said he, modestly, addressing Mrs. Tagrag.

"I—I—no—that is—not *to-day*," she replied, colouring.

"Vastly amusing, isn't it?" interposed Tagrag, to prevent mischief—for he knew his wife would as soon have taken a cockatrice into her hand.

"Ye—e—s," replied Titmouse, who had not even glanced at the copy which Snap had brought him. "An uncommon good fight between Birmingham Big—"

Tagrag saw his wife getting redder and redder. "No news stirring about Ministers, is there?" said he, with a desperate attempt at a diversion.

"Not that I have heard," replied Titmouse. Soon he got a little further, and said how cheerful the stages going past must make the house. Tagrag agreed with him. Then there was a little pause.

"Been to church, mem, this morning, mem?" timidly inquired Titmouse of Miss Tagrag.

"Yes, sir," she replied, faintly colouring, casting her eyes to the ground, and suddenly putting her hand into that of her mother—with such an innocent, engaging simplicity—like a timid fawn lying as close as possible to its dam!

"We always go to *chapel*, sir," said Mrs. Tagrag, confidently, in spite of a very fierce look from her husband; "the gospel isn't preached in the Church of England. We sit under Mr. Horror—a heavenly preacher! You've heard of Mr. Horror?"

"Yes, mem! Oh, yes! Capital preacher!" replied Titmouse, who of course (being a true church man) had never in his life heard of Mr. Horror, or any other dissenter.

"When *will* dinner be ready, Mrs. T.?" inquired Tagrag, abruptly, and with a very perceptible dash of sternness in his tone; but dinner was announced the very next moment. He took his wife's arm, and, in doing so, gave it a sudden vehement pressure, which, coupled with a furious glance, explained to her the extent to which she had incurred his anger. She thought, however, of Mr. Horror, and was silent.

Titmouse's proffered arm the timid Miss Tagrag scarcely touched with the tip of her finger, as she walked beside

him to dinner. Titmouse soon got tolerably composed and cheerful at dinner, (which consisted of a little piece of nice roast beef, with plenty of horse-radish, Yorkshire pudding, a boiled fowl, a plum pudding made by Mrs. Tagrag, and custards which had been superintended by Miss Tagrag,) and, to oblige his hospitable host and hostess, eat till he was fit to burst. Miss Tagrag, though really very hungry, eat only a very small slice of beef, and a quarter of a custard, and drank a third of a glass of sherry after dinner. She never once spoke, except in hurried answers to her papa and mamma; and, sitting exactly opposite Titmouse, (with only a plate of greens and a boiled fowl between them,) was continually colouring whenever their eyes happened to encounter one another, on which occasion hers would suddenly drop, as if overpowered by the brilliance of his. Titmouse began to love her very fast. After the ladies had withdrawn, you should have heard the way that Tagrag went on with Titmouse—I can liken the two to nothing but an old fat spider, and a little fly.

> "Will you come into my parlour?
> Said the spider to the fly;"

and it might have been well for Titmouse to have answered, in the language of the aforesaid fly:—

> "No, thank you, sir, I really feel
> No curiosity."

Titmouse, however, swallowed with equal facility Mr. Tagrag's hard port and his soft blarney; but *all* fools have large swallows. When at length Tagrag alluded to the painfully evident embarrassment of his "poor Tabby," and said he had "now found out what had been so long the matter with her," ay, even this went down, and hemmed, and winked his eye, and drained his glass, Titmouse began to get flustered, blushed, and hoped Mr. Tagrag would soon "join the ladies." They did so, (Tagrag stopping behind to lock up the wine and the remains of the fruit.) Miss Tagrag presided over the tea things. There were muffins, and crumpets, and reeking-hot buttered toast; Mrs. Tagrag would hear of no denial,

so poor Titmouse, after the most desperate resistance was obliged to swallow a round of toast, half a muffin, and an entire crumpet, and four cups of hot tea; after which he felt a very painful degree of turgidity, and a conviction that he should be able to eat and drink nothing for the remainder of the week.

After the tea things had been removed, Tagrag, directing Titmouse's attention to the piano, which was open, (with some music on it, ready to be played from,) asked him whether he liked music. Titmouse, with great eagerness, hoped Miss T. would give them some music; and she, after holding out a long and vigorous siege, at length asked her papa what it should be.

"*The Battle of Prague*," said her papa.

"*Before Jehovah's awful throne*," hastily interposed her mamma.

"The Battle," sternly repeated her papa.

"It's Sunday night, Mr. T.," meekly rejoined his wife.

"Which will *you* have, Mr. Titmouse?" inquired Tagrag, with *The Battle of Prague* written in every feature of his face. Titmouse almost burst into a state of perspiration.

"A little of both, sir, if you please."

"Well," replied Tagrag, slightly relaxing, "that will do. Split the difference—eh? Come, Tab, down with you. Titmouse, will you turn over the music for her?"

Titmouse rose, and having sheepishly taken his station beside Miss Tagrag, the performances commenced with *Before Jehovah's awful throne!* But, mercy upon us! at what a rate she rattled over that "pious air." If its respectable composer had been present he must have gone into a fit; but there was no help for it—the heart of the lovely performer was in *The Battle of Prague*, to which she presently did most ample justice. So much were her feelings engaged in that sublime composition, that the bursting of one of the strings—twang! in the middle of the "*canonnading*," did not at all disturb her; and, as soon as she had finished the exquisite "finale," Titmouse was in such a tumult of excitement, from different causes, that he could have shed tears. Though he had never once turned over the right place, Miss Tagrag thanked him for his services with a smile of infinite

sweetness. Titmouse vowed he had never heard such splendid music—begged for more; and away went Miss Tagrag, hurried away by her excitement. Rondo after rondo, march after march, for at least half an hour; at the end of which old Tagrag suddenly kissed her with passionate fondness. Though Mrs. Tagrag was horrified at the impiety of all this, she kept a very anxious eye on the young couple, and interchanged with her husband every now and then, very significant looks. Shortly after nine, spirits, wine, and hot and cold water, were brought in. At the sight of them Titmouse looked alarmed—for he knew that he must take something more, though he would have freely given five shillings to be excused—for he felt as if he could not hold one drop more. But it was in vain. Willy-nilly, a glass of gin and water stood soon before him; he protested he could not touch it unless Miss Tagrag would "take something"—whereupon, with a blush, she "thought she *would*" take a wine-glass of sherry and water. This was provided her. Then Tagrag mixed a tumbler of port wine negus for Mrs. Tagrag, and a great glass of mahogany-coloured brandy and water for himself; and then he looked round, and felt perfectly happy. As Titmouse advanced with his gin and water, his spirits got higher and higher, and his tongue more fluent. He once or twice dropped the "Mr." when addressing Tagrag; several times smiled, and once even winked at the embarrassed Miss Tagrag. Mr. Tagrag saw it, and could not control himself—for he had got to the end of his first glass of brandy and water, and mixed himself a second, quite *as* strong as the former.

"Tab! ah, Tab! what *has* been the matter with you all these months?"—and he winked his eye at her and then at Titmouse.

"Papa!" exclaimed Miss Tagrag, blushing up to her very temples.

"Ah, Titmouse—Titmouse—give me your hand," said Tagrag; "you'll forget us all when you are a great man—but we shall always remember you."

"You're very good—very!" said Titmouse, cordially returning the pressure of Tagrag's hand. At that instant, it suddenly occurred to him to adopt the suggestion of

Mr. Gammon. Tagrag was going on very fast, indeed, about the disinterested nature of his feelings towards Titmouse—towards whom, he said, he had always felt just as he did at that moment—'twas in vain to deny it.

"I'm sure your conduct shows it, sir," commenced Titmouse, feeling a shudder like that with which a timid bather approaches the margin of the cold stream. "I could have taken my oath, sir, you would have refused to let me come into your house, when you heard of it—"

"Ah ha!—that's *rather* an odd idea, too. If I felt a true friendship for you as plain Titmouse, it's so likely I should. My dear sir! it was *I* that thought *you* wouldn't have come into *my* house! A likely thing!"

Titmouse was puzzled. His perceptions, never very quick or clear, were now undoubtedly somewhat obfuscated with what he had been drinking. In short, he did not understand that Tagrag had not understood *him;* and felt rather baffled.

"What suprising ups and downs there are in life, Mr. Titmouse," said Mrs. Tagrag respectfully—"they're all sent from above, to try us. No one knows how they'd behave, if as how (in a manner) they were turned upside down."

"I—I hope, mem, I haven't done any thing to show ——"

"Oh! my dear Titmouse," anxiously interrupted Tagrag, inwardly cursing his wife, who, finding she always went wrong in her husband's eyes whenever she spoke a word, determined for the future to stick to her negus—"the fact is, there's a Mr. Horror here that's for sending all decent people to ——. He's filled my wife there with all sorts of——nay, if she is'nt bursting with cant—so never mind her. You done any thing wrong! You're a pattern!"

"Well,—I'm a happy man again," resumed Titmouse, resolved now to go on. "And when did they tell you of it, sir?"

"Oh, a few days ago—a week ago," replied Tagrag, trying to recollect.

"Why—why—sir—ain't you mistaken?" inquired Titmouse with a depressed, but at the same time a surprised air. "It only happened this morning after you left."

"Eh—eh—ah, ha!—What *do* you mean, Mr. Titmouse?" interrupted Tagrag, with a sickening attempt at a smile. Mrs. Tagrag and Miss Tagrag also turned exceedingly startled faces towards Titmouse, who felt as if a house were going to fall down on him.

"Why, sir,"—he began to cry, (an attempt which was greatly aided by the maudlin condition to which drink had reduced him,)—"till to-day, I thought I was heir to ten thousand a-year—and it seems I'm not—it's all a mistake."

Tagrag's face changed visibly; it was getting frightful to look at; the inward shock and agony were forcing out on his slanting forehead great drops of perspiration.

"What—a—capital—joke—Mr. Titmouse!" he gasped, drawing his handkerchief over his forehead. Titmouse, though greatly alarmed, stood to his gun pretty steadily.

"I—I wish it was a joke! I'ts been no joke to *me*, sir. There's another Tittlebat Titmouse, it seems, in Shoreditch, that's the right——"

"Who told you this, sir?—Pho, I don't—I can't believe it," said Tagrag, in a voice tremulous between suppressed rage and fear.

"True, 'pon my life. It is——"

"How dare you swear before the ladies? You're insulting them, sir!" almost roared Tagrag. "You're not a gentleman." He suddenly dropped his voice, and, in a a trembling and most earnest manner asked Titmouse whether he was really joking or serious.

"Never more serious in my life, sir."

"It's really all up?"

Titmouse groaned. A satanic scowl shot over Tagrag's disgusting features.

"Oh, ma—I do feel so ill!" faintly exclaimed Miss Tagrag, turning deadly pale. Titmouse was on the verge of dropping on his knees, and confessing the trick, greatly agitated at the effect produced on Miss Tagrag: when Tagrag's heavy hand was suddenly placed on his shoulder, and he whispered in a fierce under tone—"You impostor!" and that stopped Titmouse, and made something like a MAN of him. He was a fearful fool, but he did not want for mere *pluck*, and now it was roused. Mrs. Tagrag exclaimed, "Oh, you shocking scamp!" as she passed Titmouse, and led her daughter out of the room.

"If I'm an impostor, sir, I'm no fit company for *you*, I suppose, sir," said Titmouse, rising.

"Pay me my five-pound note," almost shouted Tagrag.

"Well, sir, if I'm poor, I an't a rogue," said Titmouse, preparing to give him what he asked for; when a faint shriek was heard, plainly from Miss Tagrag, overhead. Then the seething caldron boiled over. "You infernal scoundrel," said Tagrag, almost choked with fury; and suddenly seizing Titmouse by the collar, scarce giving him time, in passing, to get hold of his hat and stick, he urged him along through the passage, down the gravel walk, threw open the gate, thrust him furiously through it, and sent after him such a blast of execration, as was enough to drive him a hundred yards down the road. Titmouse did not fully recover his breath or his senses for more than half an hour afterwards. When he did, the first thing that occurred to him was, an inclination to fall down on his knees on the open road, and worship the sagacious and admirable GAMMON.

And now Tittlebat Titmouse, for some little time, I have done with you. Away!—give room to your betters. But don't think that I have yet "rifled *all* your sweetness," or am about to "fling you like a noisome weed away."

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